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A guide to preachers





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# A GUIDE TO PREACHERS

*✓* BY PRINCIPAL  
A. E. GARVIE, M.A., D.D.

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**DEDICATED TO**  
**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES**  
**AT MACDUFF AND MONTROSE**  
**IN GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE**  
**OF TEN YEARS' MINISTRY IN "THE**  
**GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF**  
**THE BLESSED GOD."**



## PREFACE

AT the request of a Committee appointed by Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church, London, I undertook in November, 1904, to conduct a Class for Lay Preachers, and this was carried on with only such breaks as were caused by College Vacations till June, 1906. Outlines of the lectures, which were considerably expanded in the delivery, were prepared by me for the *Examiner*; and these, with some alterations and additions, form this volume. I had intended to expand the outlines, but found that by so doing I should so increase the size and therefore enhance the price of the book as to put it beyond the reach of those whom by its publication I most desire to benefit. Besides, the expansion was not necessary to fulfil the purpose of the volume, which is by no means to offer an adequate treatment of the matters dealt with, but to suggest the subjects to be studied and the best ways of studying them. Its aim is to help lay preachers,

especially in their preparation for preaching; but it is hoped that it may be of some use to ministers who have not enjoyed the advantage of a College training or who have not been able to keep up their studies since leaving College. I should hardly venture to offer this guide to my brother-ministers as well as to lay preachers, had I not been repeatedly assured by some of them that the outlines as they appeared in the *Examiner* had been found helpful and there was a desire for their publication in book form among my brethren. I have retained the lecture form, as there was no adequate reason for recasting the whole book, and I myself prefer the mode of direct personal address. My thanks are due to the editor of the *Examiner* for allowing the re-publication of matter which has already appeared in its columns.

I send forth this work in the earnest hope that it may in some measure advance a movement which has my whole-hearted sympathy—the increased use of lay agency in the preaching of the Gospel.

ALFRED E. GARVIE.

ABERYSTWYTH.

*August 29, 1906.*

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## INTRODUCTION

A DISTINGUISHED theological writer and teacher, Dr. Denney, of Glasgow, recently gave his opinion, in an article in the *London Quarterly Review*, on the education of the ministry, and stated the necessary preparation for the sacred vocation as threefold. The preacher must so know his Bible as to find the Gospel in it; be so familiar with the thought of his age as to adapt his preaching to its needs and questions; be so thoroughly trained as regards both his literary style and his mode of delivery, as to commend his message by its manner as well as its matter. Although the lay preacher cannot be expected to discipline and develop his powers in the same measure as he who is set apart from all other interests and pursuits for the ministry of the Word as his life-long vocation, yet these three requirements with the necessary limitations and modifications may be accepted as defining the ideal

## INTRODUCTION

which he, too, should set himself as far as he can to realise.

2. The deeper interest in, and wider diffusion of, modern Biblical scholarship, make it imperative that, when the lay preacher delivers the Gospel, he should not awaken distrust in the minds of informed and intelligent hearers by treating the Bible by antiquated methods of study, but, without entering on disputable questions, should be able to show in his preaching that he is not ignorant of, because indifferent to, the fresh light that is falling on the sacred page. The discussion of such problems as the personality of God, the liberty of man, the immortality of the soul, in cheap, popular literature, makes it imperative that even the lay preacher should know what many of those he is addressing are thinking on these great subjects, that he should be qualified to speak a word in season in relief of doubt, or for the removal of difficulty. I am persuaded that a great deal of good could be done by intelligent Christian men, who could freely take part in discussion on these themes, and could commend the Christian solution of these problems as the most intelligible and credible. The men whom this modern unbelief touches most closely are usually least within the reach of the influence of the Christian ministry, and

their Christian fellow-workers and companions could, if qualified, do them a great service by removing their misconceptions regarding Christian truth, as the success of this anti-Christian propaganda depends largely on an appeal to ignorance and prejudice. Among many men, of the working classes especially, the social problem is the greatest intellectual interest, and it would be well for lay preachers to be able to exhibit and emphasise the social aspects of the Christian Gospel ; and that task demands knowledge and insight. Education is now more general ; literature of many kinds has a wide circulation ; and the pulpit or the platform must not be allowed to fall behind, but must be kept in advance of the popular intelligence and culture. The illiterate preacher, with bad grammar, pronunciation, and gesture, has done a great deal of good service in the past, but now he is likely to be offensive to many hearers, and, accordingly, the lay preacher, no less than the minister, must not be indifferent to the arts of expression.

3. In this volume the endeavour will be made to offer help in the study of each of these subjects. In dealing with the Gospel in the Bible it will first be shown by what method the Bible is to be studied, and then in what way the Gospel therein discovered is to be stated. The first section will be, therefore, entitled, *How to Study*

## INTRODUCTION

*the Bible*, and the second, *How to State the Gospel*. The third section will deal not only with the preparation of the sermon, but also with its delivery, under the general title of *How to Preach*. In the fourth section an attempt will be made to deal with both some of the theoretical and some of the practical difficulties of to-day in the hope that the preacher may thus learn *How to Meet the Age* by adapting his message to the needs of his hearers.

**FIRST SECTION**

**HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE**



## INTRODUCTORY

BEFORE entering on this study it seems to be necessary to deal with a preliminary objection which may suggest itself to some minds. Why should the Bible be our textbook? Has not recent knowledge and thought considerably abated the claims which used to be made for the Bible? It is very generally supposed that for three reasons at least the unique significance and the supreme value of the Bible for the thought and life of man may be denied. Science is held to have discredited its teaching about nature and man. The other sacred literatures—the Koran, the Zend-Avesta, the Vedas, the Tripitakas, the Analects of Confucius—are supposed to be threatening, if they have not already overthrown, its sole religious sovereignty. The historical and literary criticism of the writings of which it is composed is assumed (and the violent opposition of some Christians to this modern scholarship lends some countenance to this assumption) to have disproved

## 8 HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

its claim to be the record of the best and truest Divine revelation. To answer these objections is the task of Christian apologetics, but in a few sentences the answer may be suggested. It is not the function of the Bible to teach science, and those who opposed its teaching to the discoveries of science did so under a complete misapprehension of its essential function, which is to make men wise unto salvation. The meaning and worth of the Bible does not depend on the correctness of any of the statements it contains on matters that fall properly under the purview of science. The other sacred literatures are not without religious value and significance, are not without some measure of Divine inspiration ; but a candid and sympathetic comparison of them with the Bible shows that their moral and religious teaching, as a whole, is greatly inferior, that none contains the history of a progressive revelation to a people by a succession of prophets as does the Bible ; that the supreme religious personality in those so dominated cannot in moral character, spiritual vision, redeeming function, be likened for a moment to Jesus Christ. Mohammed is gross and unclean beside His purity ; Confucius is cold propriety beside His glowing affection ; even Gautama the Buddha, who, in self-denial and in pity for men, comes nearer to Him than any other, falls far short of

His self-sacrificing love. But, as the welcome the Bible has found among the peoples who possess these literatures shows, none of these contains a Gospel of the grace of God unto the salvation of men from sin, death, and doom as the Bible does, and this sets it apart from and above all other holy writings. The results of criticism may change our conception of the mode, but do not lessen our certainty of the fact, of the Divine revelation in the Bible, as is attested by the circumstance that many who most heartily welcome these newer methods of study, are as loyal and devoted to the Gospel in the Bible as those who fear and shun the new and love and cleave to the old ways.

2. In seeking the Gospel in the Bible we might devote our attention either to the product or to the process of study. I might give you at once a sketch of the Gospel as I find it in the Bible. But it will be a much more useful discipline for you if I first of all indicate to you the method in which you may deal with the Bible so as to get from it the message which you want to deliver. For, were I to adopt the first course, you would be made unduly dependent on my understanding of the Bible, whereas, by adopting the second course, I may place you in the position of being able to draw from its treasure-house things new and old. But even in adopting the

## 10 HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

second course two ways of treatment seem to be open to me. I could give you an account of the abundant material for the study of the Bible which modern scholarship offers. You will, however, find all this readily accessible in a number of cheap popular handbooks on Biblical Introduction, History, Doctrine. What I purpose to do rather is to show you practically how to use all these aids in your study of a text or passage of Scripture with a view to preaching upon it. With the Bible open before us, we shall together formulate and illustrate the rules for the study of the Bible, which we must faithfully follow, if we are not to put on the inspired writings our own private interpretations, but are to discover, as fully and clearly as we can, the mind of the Spirit. Such serious and sincere study is a binding duty; that cannot be for profit which is not according to truth. The more honestly we deal with the Bible the more effectively may we hope to deliver its message to men—the Gospel of God's grace to save and bless men through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# I

## WRONG METHODS OF STUDY

A RIDING-MASTER once told those he was teaching that it was much easier to make a good horseman of one who had never sat on a horse's back than of one who believed that he could ride, as there were in the latter case as many bad tricks to unlearn as good rules to learn. Those who have studied their Bible that they might teach and preach may have got into bad methods, against which they must be warned before they can be guided to the right method. It is to be feared that some wrong methods have received the sanction of long use and common habit. A few of these may be briefly mentioned.

2. The earliest method of Biblical interpretation was the *Rabbinic*, which, professing to have rules, was as arbitrary, artificial, accidental as could possibly be. Sometimes there was madness in its method. This way of handling the

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Scriptures would be to us now only of historical interest, had not Paul apparently given it the sanction of his own practice. When he lays stress on the use of the singular and not the plural number of the collective noun *seed* (Gal. iii. 16), when he treats Sarah and Hagar as an allegory of the two covenants (Gal. iv. 21-31), when he identifies Christ as the spiritual rock that followed the Israelites in the wilderness (1 Cor. x. 4), the Jewish Rabbi appears in the Christian apostle. While we accept his testimony to what the grace of Christ had done for him, we cannot be bound by the exegetical methods he had learned in the Jewish schools.

3. During the Patristic period the *allegorical* method was very generally adopted. Philo had used the method that he might discover Greek philosophy in the Jewish Scriptures. For him "the history of mankind, as related in Genesis, is in reality nothing else than a system of psychology and ethics. The different individuals who here make their appearance denote the different states of soul which occur among men." The story of the relations of Abraham to Sarah and Hagar is allegorised by Philo as follows: Abraham—the human soul progressing towards the knowledge of God—is not ready for a fruitful union with Sarah—Divine wisdom—and must be prepared for it by a fruitful

alliance with Hagar—the instruction of the schools. To use modern philosophical language, the discipline of the understanding must precede the development of the reason. The Christian fathers used this method to discover Christian doctrine in the Old Testament, and so to justify the adoption and use of the Jewish Scriptures in the Christian Church. The more offensive to Christian taste a passage seemed, the more necessary to discover its Christian meaning. Augustine represents Noah drunk as a symbol of the shame of the manhood of Christ on the Cross. A threefold sense—the literal, the doctrinal or ethical, and the mystical, corresponding to man's body, soul, and spirit—was sought for. The mediæval mystics knew even a sevenfold sense. This method has survived in Protestantism in what is described as “spiritualising” the Ark with its beasts, the plagues of Egypt, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, &c. The interpretation of the Song of Solomon as an allegory of the relation either of the soul of the Christian or of the Christian Church to Christ, still finds its defenders, although it is a survival of a discredited and, for the most part, discarded method. A modern example of this allegorical method may be given. Not many years ago an evangelist made the words, “Wilt thou go with this man?” (Gen. xxiv. 58) do service as an

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invitation to faith in Christ, and not only so, but elaborated the analogy. Abraham represents God the Father, Isaac Christ, the servant the Spirit, Rebekah the soul of man; the Spirit is sent by the Father to bring the soul of man to Christ.

4. Contrasted with the allegorical method, which treats history as philosophy or theclogy, is the *literalist* method, which treats poetry as prose. The figurative language of the prophets is accepted as history written beforehand, and it is expected that all predictions will some day be fulfilled to the very letter. Hence the wasted ingenuity of the interpreters of the signs of the times. The language of Daniel and of the Revelation lends itself with greatest ease to this sort of spurious learning. This method ignores what will afterwards be much more fully explained and illustrated: the different literary character of different parts of the Bible, demanding a corresponding change in the way of interpretation. Prose must be treated as prose, and poetry as poetry.

5. A method which is not at all unknown in the present day is what may be called the *dogmatic* method. The Bible is treated as a text-book of theology; proof-texts for any and every doctrine are found in all parts of it. The plural in Gen. i. 26, "Let us make man in our

image," is taken as a proof of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; so also the three parables in Luke xv. are claimed as evidence of the distinctive operations of the three persons in the Godhead in bringing about man's salvation. But perhaps the most wonderful example of dogmatical exegesis I have heard of was the exposition of the Messianic prophecy in Isa. ix. 6 given by an evangelist. The first clause, "a child is born," teaches the humanity; the second clause, "a son is given," the divinity of Christ; the name "Wonderful" declares the mystery of the union of the two natures in the one person. The singular in the word "shoulder," as contrasted with the plural in the word "shoulders," in Luke xv. 5, proves that the government of the world is easier than saving one soul.

6. A somewhat similar method, although carried out with more system, may be described as the *topical*, or, as the words are taken as representative of the subjects, the *verbal* method. With the help of a concordance, all the passages in which a certain word is used are collected together, and it is supposed that the full teaching of the Scriptures on the subject represented by the word is thus discovered. But what is ignored in this method is that the same word has different shades of meaning, in different contexts, at different periods, for different

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writers. Take *faith*, for instance. When Habakkuk (chap. ii. 4) declares that “the just shall live by his faith,” he means that the man righteous in character shall be preserved on account of his fidelity. When Paul quotes these words (Rom. i. 17), he means that the man justified by his trust in God’s saving grace in Christ shall enjoy eternal life. When Paul speaks of faith he means a personal trust in, surrender to, union with, Christ, and, therefore, he is confident that faith will energise through love (Gal. v. 6). When James speaks of faith, he means a mental assent to truth, and he can, therefore, warn against the faith that is dead, because without works (chap. ii. 17). The definition of faith in Hebrews xi. 1 would not correspond exactly with either Paul’s or James’s use. The concordance can be safely used only by those who are prepared to study each text in its context, and to recognise the diverse usages of the same words in Scripture. One instance of bad exegesis, resulting from a refusal to recognise this diversity, may be mentioned. Because “leaven” means a harmful influence in Christ’s warning to His disciples against the Pharisees (Matt. xvi. 6–11), it is maintained that it cannot mean the healthful influence of the Gospel in the parable of the leaven (chap. xiii. 33), but must mean the spread of corruption in the Church.

## II

### DIFFERENCES OF RENDERING

**A**N old lady purchasing a Bible was asked if she wanted an Authorised or a Revised Version, and indignantly replied that she did not want any versions, but the Bible as God gave it. A disputant in a theological controversy, when informed that the original Greek of a text quoted entirely excluded his interpretation of the English rendering, declined to have anything to do with any other book than his English Bible. It is to be feared that, if not in theory, yet in practice, many readers, and even students, of the Bible assume that King James's translators have handed on to us the Bible just as God gave it, so that they need not concern themselves about the original Greek or Hebrew. But if we want the Bible in its original form, we must recognise that in the Authorised Version we have before us a translation which, with its many excellences,

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the praises of which have been long and loudly sung, combines not a few defects and errors, which even the Revised Version does not always correct and remove. If even the translation were all that could be desired, yet doubt and difficulty might arise about the text. For many centuries the Old and the New Testaments were transmitted in MSS., which are far more liable to change and error than printed books are, and it is now recognised that the text translated in the Authorised Version contained many corruptions, and that the Revised Version text, though an undoubted improvement, is by no means final, but that there is still room for progress. Leaving the subject of the text for treatment in the next lecture, let us indicate now how our study of the Bible ought to be affected by the fact that we are dealing with a translation.

2. As has already been indicated, the text of the Revised Version, in the New Testament at least—for the investigation of the text of the Old Testament is a study comparatively in its infancy—is a decided advance on that of the Authorised Version. But this is not its only advantage. The two languages, Hebrew and Greek, in which the two Testaments are respectively written (with the exception of a few Aramaic passages), are better known than

they were in the reign of James I. And even now the study of Arabic and other Semitic tongues is increasing our knowledge of Hebrew, while the discovery of monumental inscriptions and papyri of very varied character is daily enlarging our knowledge of the "common dialect" in which the New Testament is written, so that in future less reliance than hitherto will be placed on classical usage in determining the meaning of its language. In this respect even the Revised Version does not fully represent the results of modern scholarship. Regarding this version, it must be remembered that, owing to the rules adopted by the revisers, what may be called ecclesiastical conservatism often asserts itself in the readings and renderings adopted, while the freest and freshest modern scholarship is to be found in the marginal notes. Accordingly, in using the Revised Version the margin should always be most carefully consulted, and, even if the readings and renderings given there are not preferred, they will throw fresh light upon the passage which is being studied.

3. The principle adopted by the revisers to make as few changes as possible has led them to retain words which, if not obsolete, are at least more rarely used, and are becoming unfamiliar. Their English, if not antiquated,

is not modern. Their practice is by no means incapable of defence. It does seem desirable to repair the wear and tear of our daily speech, to prevent the waste of words that is ever going on, to maintain the continuity of our language as completely as we can. Religion assigns so great value to sacred memories and hallowed associations, that it may be maintained that it is justified in being more conservative in its terms and phrases than science or commerce or society need be. But on the other hand, it is argued that the very familiarity of the language makes us see less clearly and feel less keenly the sense of the Bible, which now needs to be brought out of the church into the street, out of the closet into the mart. Hence several attempts have been recently made to present the New Testament in the language of our common life to-day. In "The Twentieth Century New Testament," based on what has been generally regarded as the best modern Greek text, Westcott and Hort's, although more recently its superiority has been challenged, the translation is brought up to date. My impression is that it goes further than is necessary in abandoning simple English words, and in adopting a Latinised vocabulary. Yet no one can deny that often the startling changes in

the language which it introduces arrest attention, secure interest, and so promote study and intelligence. A similar undertaking is Weymouth's "The New Testament in Modern Speech," based on the text of "The Resultant New Testament," which is described as "exhibiting the text in which the majority of modern editors are agreed." In this more moderation in modernising the language seems to have been exercised. A careful perusal of these two modern translations will send the student back to the Revised or the Authorised Version with a clearer eye and a keener scent for the significance and the suggestion of any text or passage. A study of a version in a foreign tongue may also serve to deliver us from the bondage of familiarity, which often dulls instead of quickens our sense of the meaning and worth of the Bible.

4. Some illustrations of different renderings may give to our present discussion a practical application. In Psa. cx. 3 the Authorised Version has the phrase "in the beauties of holiness," which has doubtless served as a text for many a sermon on the attractiveness and graciousness of a saintly life, or has sometimes been used as a defence of stately architecture, fine music, dignified ritual in Church worship. The Revised Version retains the rendering, but

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in the margin gives a far more realistic phrase—"in holy attire." The people are represented as approaching their sovereign in their best garments, the clothing they don only at their religious festivals. Again, a slight change of rendering in Isa. lxi. 3 gives us a more complete and vivid picture. For the Authorised Version "beauty for ashes" the Revised offers "a garland for ashes," thus giving us a fuller description of the change of appearance effected by an Oriental to mark his change of feeling. A very decided gain in intelligibility is found in the Revised Version, as compared with the Authorised, in Isa. liii. 8. "By oppression and judgment he was taken away," in the first clause, is much clearer in meaning than "He was taken from prison and from judgment." The next clause in the Authorised Version—"and who shall declare his generation?"—has no distinct meaning, nor has it any apparent connection with the clause following: "for he was cut off out of the land of the living." But the Revised Version reaffirms the misunderstanding and scorn to which the servant of Jehovah was exposed in his own age and people: "And as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living?" There can be little doubt that the Revised Version, in

Luke ii. 49, "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" renders the ambiguous Greek phrase, "in the things of my Father," much more appropriately to the context than the Authorised Version: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" In John i. 11 the margin of the Revised Version must be consulted in order that the ambiguity of the Authorised Version may be fully escaped: "He came unto his own" (neuter plural), "and his own" (masculine plural) "received him not." While the Revised Version renders the second phrase "they that were his own," it refers us to the margin to discover that the first phrase means "his own things." "The Twentieth Century New Testament" gives a good rendering: "He came to what was his own, yet those who were his own did not receive him." Although the Authorised Version of Acts xxvi. 28, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," has served as the ground of many an earnest, fervent, evangelical appeal, yet the Revised Version, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian," is not only a more correct rendering of the Greek phrase, but expresses more accurately the scornful, sceptical attitude of Agrippa. While the Revised Version, in Rom. ix. 5, adopts the usual interpretation that the description "who

is over all" and the ascription of praise "God blessed for ever" refer to Christ, it rightly adds in the margin, "Some modern interpreters place a full stop after *flesh*, and translate, 'He who is God over all be (is) blessed for ever; or, 'He who is over all is God, blessed for ever.' Others punctuate, flesh, who is over all, God be (is) blessed for ever." The readers of the English Bible should know when any rendering involves the decision of a difficult question of interpretation. The Revised Version is an undoubted improvement on the Authorised Version in the important doctrinal passage, Phil. ii. 6. The rendering "counted it not a prize" is far better than the rendering "thought it not robbery," as what is asserted is Christ's surrender, not His claim. The word "emptied" does justice to the Greek word, which is robbed of half its meaning in the clause "made himself of no reputation." These examples must suffice to justify the demand that the Revised Version, with margin, should always be studied as well as the Authorised Version.

### III

#### VARIETY OF READINGS

THE student of the English Bible must recognise that not only is he reading a translation, but that, even if he could read the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, he would still need to admit some uncertainty in some passages regarding the words used in the original writings, as both Testaments were transmitted for centuries only in MSS. It is the purpose of the lower or textual criticism to remedy as far as possible the defects inherent in this method of transmission. It seeks to get as near as possible to what was first written by the comparison, classification, and valuation of all the MSS. at command.

2. As regards the text of the Old Testament only a beginning has been made, as all the MSS., the oldest of which probably belongs to the tenth century, we now possess offer us a text, generally known as the Massoretic, which was

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the result of the labours of Jewish scholars, who, with the very best intentions, had not the adequate means at their disposal, nor yet employed the exact methods of research which would have ensured that the text they adopted would be the very best possible. During the course of the history of the language of the Old Testament the consonantal signs were twice changed; the vowels, with a very few exceptions, were not marked at all until the Massoretic system of vowel-pointing was adopted some centuries after the Christian era; the letters forming different words were not separated from one another; and there was no punctuation. It can easily be seen how great was the danger of mistakes being made in the copying of MSS. That our MSS. of the Hebrew Bible have not transmitted to us the only text of the Old Testament is proved by the fact that the Septuagint, a Greek translation executed in Egypt before the Christian era, has preserved very many readings so widely different that we are forced to the conclusion that either the Egyptian tradition regarding the text was very unlike the Palestinian, or that the Palestinian was very greatly modified by the labours of the scribes. The former is the more probable conclusion. Some recent researches tend to show that the text of the Old

Testament in use among the Babylonian Jews differed from both the Egyptian and the Palestinian. The subject is being very carefully investigated by competent scholars, but the results of their labours are not yet available for the use of the student of the English Bible. He must be content with the text as it is, using such help as is offered by the Revised Version with its margin, in which the variant readings recognised by the Jewish scribes are noted. There is one consolation, that our Christian faith is far less dependent on the exact text of the Old Testament than on that of the New.

3. With respect to the New Testament, we are in a much more favourable position, as we have now two manuscripts of the fourth, and two of the fifth century, at our disposal, besides a very great number of later date, which present to us a very great variety of readings. We have also early translations of the New Testament into other languages, of which we can examine the readings, and quotations from the Fathers also offer us a source of information about the text which they were familiar with. But not only is our material for the construction of a text so abundant, the method of dealing with this material has recently gained in scientific precision. By careful comparison of the text found in different MSS., it has been established

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that we are not dealing with a multitude of individual copies, but that there are distinct groups, which their characteristics allow us to date and localise with some approach to certainty. While scholars are not entirely agreed about the comparative value of these groups, yet further investigation is likely to lead to closer agreement. While the text which has been adopted in the Revised Version cannot lay claim to any finality or inerrancy, a careful study of it, with special attention to the margin, will place the student in possession of the most valuable results of this modern scholarship as applied in what is known as textual criticism. As the mention of a multitude of variant readings may excite anxiety, it may be added that "the extremest margin of observed variation leaves seven-eighths of the text untouched, and while it affects here and there a favourite proof-text, it leaves the whole voice of Scripture on the main problems of life and conduct practically unchanged. And even this debatable one-eighth may be reduced by the careful application of the methods indicated, till, in the judgment of the most competent critics, 'the amount of what can in any sense be called a substantial variation hardly forms more than a thousandth part of the entire text.'"

4. Although there is little progress made as

yet in the investigation of the text of the Old Testament, one illustration which is of quite exceptional interest may be given. We are all familiar with the word *Jehovah* as a proper name for God as distinctively Israel's God. It is as surprising, as it is interesting, to learn that the ancient Hebrew never uttered any such word as our letters represent. The word, as we pronounce it, combines the consonants of the Hebrew proper name for God, JHVH, and the vowels of the Hebrew word for Lord, *Adonai*, as although the Massoretic text leaves the consonants in the C'thib (or written) text, owing to the reverence felt by the scribes for the consonantal text, yet it writes along with these consonants the vowels of the word *Adonai*, as an indication that that is the K'ri (or read) text. For this proper name of God was never pronounced in the reading of the Scriptures, but *Adonai* (Lord) was substituted for it. The right pronunciation of the proper name of God among the Hebrews was probably *Yahveh*, and some scholars always so write it.

5. But turning to the New Testament, we may notice some of the most important changes of text in the Revised Version as compared with the Authorised Version.

(i.) In Luke xi. 2-4 there is given an abbreviated form of the Lord's Prayer, which compels

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us to ask the question whether, if this is the true reading, as is probable, Christ gave His disciples the prayer on two different occasions, at one time in a longer, at another in a shorter form, or the same utterance has been either lengthened by the one, or shortened by the other evangelist. In support of Luke's shorter form it may be said that the clauses which he omits can be regarded as explanatory or expansive of those that immediately precede them. The margin of the Revised Version indicates that many ancient authorities add these clauses ; but this does not prove that these authorities give us the original text, as it is very much more probable that a copyist would add to the MS. which omitted the clauses found in Matthew in order to bring the two Gospels into agreement on so important a matter than that he would leave out so much from the text he was copying.

(ii.) In Matt. vi. 13 the Revised Version also leaves out the Doxology at the close of the prayer, as, although it has the support of some ancient authorities, yet it is probably a later addition indicating an early liturgical practice, which has not, however, Christ's own personal authority.

(iii.) Mark xvi. 9 appears in the Revised Version separated from verse 8 by a blank

space, and the margin gives this explanation : "The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities, omit from verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel." The internal evidence of the vocabulary, style, and contents of this passage confirms this external evidence, that the conclusion of the Gospel was probably lost at an early date, and that this brief summary, derived from the other Gospels, was added to replace it. Quite recently an indication of the origin of the passage has been discovered.

(iv.) It is noteworthy that the description of the agony in Gethsemane in Luke xxii. 43, 44 (including the appearance of the strengthening angel, and the sweat falling as great drops of blood) is omitted by many ancient authorities, although the revisers have retained it in the text. The omission of these details in Matthew and Mark justifies hesitation at least in accepting them as originally in Luke.

(v.) John vii. 53–viii. 11 is separated from the previous and the subsequent sections of the Gospel by a blank space, and in the margin it is stated that "most of the ancient authorities omit John vii. 53–viii. 11. Those which contain it vary much from each other." Here, too, the external evidence is confirmed by the internal, and, although the

passage probably contains an authentic historical reminiscence, yet it certainly is not a genuine portion of the Fourth Gospel.

(vi.) The Revised Version text omits 1 John v. 7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," as it has no support from the ancient Greek MSS., and is found in Latin manuscripts only after the sixth century. It is evidently an insertion in the interests of the dogmatic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is undoubtedly found in the New Testament, but nowhere in this later form.

## IV

### SCOPE OF THE CONTEXT

WHEN we have duly considered any difference of readings or variety of renderings which a passage or text may offer, we must next look at the context, to discover what light it throws on the meaning and the aim of the portion which we are studying. The first caution in this connection which must be given is not to put our trust in the verse or chapter divisions in the Authorised Version, but to be guided by the arrangement into paragraphs found in the Revised Version. While the former division has its advantages as a means of easy reference, and as such is retained, in so far as the indicator figures are still given in the new arrangement, it is not based on any sound principle, and is very awkwardly carried out. Let us take a few illustrations.

(i.) Isa. iii. 13-liii. 12 forms one prophecy regarding the Servant of Jehovah, and it is a

great loss that the chapter division has attached lii. 13–15 to another prophecy, and detached it from chapter liii., to which it belongs, and in connection with which it must be interpreted.

(ii.) Mark ix. 1 is the conclusion of Jesus' discourse regarding the confession of Him, and has no reference, as its attachment to verses 2–8 suggests, with the Transfiguration.

(iii.) John vii. 53 belongs, along with viii. 1–11, to the narrative, which, as we have already seen, does not form an original portion of this Gospel.

(iv.) The detachment of 1 Cor. xii. 31b from the thirteenth chapter, obscures the truth that love is the way more excellent than all the rules about spiritual gifts which Paul has just given in the twelfth chapter.

(v.) In Rom. xvi. 25 and 26 the verse division separates two relative clauses, which relate to the same antecedent, and which are expressly intended to form a rhetorical antithesis.

(iv.) In 1 Thess. v. 19–22 the division into verses is extravagant; for verses 19 and 20 go closely together, as it was in despising the prophesyings that the danger of quenching the Spirit lay. So verse 22 should not be separated from verse 21, as the abstaining from evil is the complement of the holding fast of good, both resulting from the proof of all things.

In Rom. xii. 9, which offers a parallelism of structure, no such blundering division takes place. Many more instances might be given; but let these suffice. These divisions have no authority that demands our respect. We owe our verse division to "Robert Stephens, the editor of the text of the Greek Testament, on which our Authorised Version is for the most part founded, who, as his son tells us, hastily jotted down the numbers of the verses in the margin of his Greek Testament, as an occupation to beguile the tedium of a journey from Paris to Lyons, on the basis of a similar division of the Hebrew Bible made in the preceding century. The chapters are older, dating from Cardinal Hugo, a schoolman of the thirteenth century."

2. The selection of a text or a passage for exposition should follow rather than go before the study of the context. It is more profitable to study a book of the Bible, or a considerable portion of a book, and to choose a text or passage for treatment in the light of the wider knowledge which this study gives, than to be guided in the choice simply by the attraction of some words apart from their context, perhaps to discover that the context does not justify the interpretation that has invested them with this attraction. Let our texts come to us as the

result of a disinterested study of the context, disinterested because we are not looking merely for a good text, but because we want to understand the Scriptures.

There is something very arbitrary in the convention that a verse makes a suitable text; a clause may be much more appropriate in one connection and only a number of verses in another. Some instances will make plain what is meant.

(i.) In Isa. lxi. 1-3 the three verses should be taken, if the intention is to expound the prophet's commission, which may, with the necessary modifications, be interpreted as defining the Christian ministry. The first half of verse 3, especially the words "a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," may be taken by themselves as a vivid picture of the human joy in the Divine salvation, of which the Christian Gospel offers the highest example.

(ii.) While Philippians i. 21 should preferably be explained in relation to the circumstances in which these words were written, yet a quite legitimate use is made of them if they are regarded as the watchword of Paul's life generally, as they express not his temporary mood, but his permanent attitude. We may neglect the immediate to emphasise the prox-

mate, but not less illuminative context, in Paul's history.

(iii.) 1 Cor. iii. 11-15 cannot, without loss, be treated otherwise than as one picture, conveying one truth. The one foundation, the varied buildings, the testing fire, the gain or the loss, form an indivisible unity pictorially and symbolically.

(iv.) So, too, 2 Cor. ii. 14-16 forms a continuous description of a triumphal procession, of which the several features—the captives, the incense, the decision of the fate of the prisoners—suggest closely related aspects of the Apostle's ministry in relation to Christ, to the Apostle himself, and to men brought under its influence. Only a wide and close study of the Scriptures can give the insight needed for the most appropriate selection of a text or passage for treatment.

3. When we have got the text or passage we want to deal with, and set about studying it in the context, we are at once brought face to face with the question of the scope of the context. Can we determine a scientific frontier, which will divide what for our purpose is to be our native land from foreign soil? If we study the paragraph in the Revised Version, in which the words we are studying are found, we soon discover that it, too, has its context in the book

of which it is a portion. If we set ourselves to study the book, we find that it is no isolated phenomenon, but part of a much wider whole ; it fills a place and plays a part in the history of the revelation of God, of which the Scriptures are the literature. As Tennyson, in his familiar poem, links the flower in the crannied wall to God and man, so the complete context of any text or any passage is the Bible ; we may accordingly distinguish the immediate, the proximate, and the ultimate context, or the paragraph, the book, and the Bible. When we are actually engaged in preparing an address or sermon, we must usually confine our attention to the immediate context, but the study of that will be very much more profitable if we bring to it a general knowledge of the book, and some acquaintance with its position and function in the Bible. Let us study a text in these its three contexts. Let us take Isa. liii. 11, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”

(i.) The immediate context is the prophecy in chap. lii. 13–liii. 11 ; and from it we gather the data for an interpretation of the travail of soul experienced by the Servant of Jehovah, the results of his sacrifice which he sees, and the satisfaction that the sight of these results gives. Social scorn, vicarious pain, sacrificial death,

is what he suffers; justification of many sinners, intercession for many transgressors, the fulfilment of God's saving purpose, is what he achieves; continued life, an exalted position, Divine approval are included in his satisfaction. At this stage of our study we must not apply the words directly to Jesus our Saviour and Lord, nor can we yet decide the question whether the writer intends to describe an individual person, or the nation personified.

(ii.) The proximate context is not simply the whole Book of Isaiah, for modern scholarship has proved that from chap. xl. to the end we have not the work of Isaiah, who prophesied in Jerusalem at the close of the eighth century before Christ, but of an unknown prophet, or it may even be prophets, among the Babylonian exiles, about 538 B.C. But a study of the second part of the Book of Isaiah yields the further result, that it contains minor collections of prophecies, and one of these deals with the Servant of Jehovah. We must then first of all study Isa. lii. 13–liii. 11 in connection with the following passages dealing specially with the Servant—xli. 8–20; xlvi. 1–7, 18–25; xlvi. 5–10; xlix. 1–9; l. 4–11. Such a study will show us that the Servant may mean all Israel, or it may mean the faithful in Israel; and this will prepare us for deciding the question whether

this passage deals with ideal Israel personified, or with an individual Saviour of Israel. Then we can ascertain by placing this minor collection in the context of the larger collection of prophecies, to which it belongs, what was the comfort and the help it was intended to convey to the Babylonian exiles.

(iii.) But this Exile was an outstanding experience in the history of the nation, to which God was revealing Himself, and the prophecies uttered to the exiles belong to the history of Divine revelation. In this history this passage is related to the teaching of the Old Testament about suffering, to the view taken of sacrifice, and, most important of all, to the hope of salvation, finally, perfectly fulfilled in Christ.

## V

### THE CONNECTIONS OF THE CONTEXT

WHEN we begin to consider the immediate context we very soon discover that, as the character of the writing varies, so does the connection of a text with its context, and we must, if the context is to give us all the help in the exposition of the passage which it is fitted to give, recognise this variety. If we are concerned with one of our Lord's parables, the context which we are in search of may not be found in the passage immediately preceding or succeeding, but must be sought in the historical occasion for, and the consequent didactic purpose of, the utterance. The evangelists do not always give us the guidance we need.

(i.) For instance, in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel there are gathered together a number of parables regarding the Kingdom, which probably were spoken on different occa-

sions for specific purposes, to which the evangelist, however, gives us no clue whatever. It is true that explanations of the parables of the sower, the tares, the draw-net are given in the narrative, but the companion parables of the mustard-seed and the leaven, of the hidden treasure and the goodly pearl, are left to suggest their own interpretation, which may seem easy enough, but which would undoubtedly gain in significance if we know why at one time Christ laid stress on the growth and the spread of the Kingdom of God and at another on its worth and cost.

(ii.) The setting of the companion parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin in Luke xv. is probably not the original context, and obscures the exact intention of Jesus. The first of these parables is found in Matt. xviii. 12-14, in a context which gives it greater significance. The emphasis in both parables lies on the one among the many, the one sheep of the hundred, the one coin of the ten, and it is explained in Matt. xviii. 10, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones." In the parable of the prodigal son, which in Luke accompanies these, no stress is laid on the prodigal being one son, while another remained at home; for the intention here, as the second verse of the chapter shows, is to contrast the attitude of the father and the elder

brother as reflecting the attitude of Christ and the Pharisees.

(iii.) Sometimes the context may even suggest different interpretations. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke xvi. 19-31 is very difficult to determine. Is it directed against the covetous Pharisees, who scoffed at the counsel to use wealth with a view to the future life given in the parable of the steward (ver. 14)? Is it, as verse 31 seems to indicate, a warning against the spiritual insensibility of the Pharisees, which nothing could reach? Or does verse 25 offer the clue, is reversal of circumstances characteristic of the future life? All are possible interpretations.

2. In a prophetic discourse or an apostolic epistle we may expect a continuity of thought which will afford us the explanation of any statement.

(i.) The valley of the dry bones in Ezek. xxxvii. requires no mysterious interpretation. A straightforward explanation of the whole imagery is given by the prophet himself in verses 11 to 14. There is no reference whatever to a bodily resurrection or to a future life, but only to a return of the exiles from Babylon and a restoration of their national existence.

(ii.) In the Epistle to the Romans there is an

argument, the stages of which can be distinctly distinguished and with reference to which each statement must be interpreted. If we take Rom. vi., verses 1 and 15 may seem to repeat practically the same question, but when we look more closely we shall see a very great difference. In answer to the first question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul shows that it is the very end of grace to prevent this continuance of sin. Although in the history of the race, as he has shown in the previous chapter, the abounding sin has been the occasion for the more exceedingly abounding grace (chap. v. 20), yet in the individual experience grace brings with it obligations, the fulfilment of which excludes sin. In answer to the second question, "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" which suggests that the obligations of grace are not as binding as, because not sanctioned by, the rewards or the penalties of the law, Paul shows that sin and grace alike have their inner necessities, that their ultimate issues are absolutely opposed, death in the one case, life in the other.

(iii.) Rom. v. 12-21 can be properly interpreted only in its context. Paul is not expounding the origin of sin and of death; he takes the current views for granted, and he uses them to prove that, as a universal con-

demnation of mankind came through one person, so a universal salvation was even more likely to come through one.

3. But we must not take for granted that even in what appears to be a continuous argument the succession of ideas is altogether determined by logical necessity.

(i.) The objections which Paul deals with in the course of his argument in Romans do not inevitably present themselves as resulting from that argument itself. Paul does not at each stage cast about to discover what may be said against his reasoning. It is much more probable that he had been informed by friends in Rome what arguments were being used against his gospel by converts from Judaism, who were still zealous for the law, and that at the most fitting point in his Epistle he takes up and deals with objections not imagined, but really advanced. This may suggest to us that there is, as it were, a context to be read between the lines, the knowledge implied and not expressed, which the Apostle possessed of the opinions and sentiments of those whom he was addressing.

(ii.) Owing to recent discoveries scholars have become very much more familiar with the epistolary phraseology of the contemporaries of the Apostle, and by means of this familiarity are able to give a fresher interpretation of some

of his letters—it becomes evident that when he seems to be developing an argument he is actually answering questions of his correspondents, weaving into his own exposition some of their statements. The first Epistle to the Corinthians is for the most part an answer to such a communication. The second Epistle alludes constantly to circumstances familiar to the writer and his readers, but which we now can only conjecture.

(iii.) Take Phil. iii. 1. Paul is evidently drawing his letter to a close, then suddenly he bursts out into a denunciation of the Judaisers, for which nothing in the letter previously prepares us. We cannot but conjecture that as he was closing his letter news had come to him from Philippi, which led him to write his warning.

4. But the context may not be historical nor logical; it may be emotional. One feeling may evoke another feeling, as well as one thought follow another; or a process of argument may be interrupted to allow the emotion it has aroused to find utterance.

(i.) Chapters ix.-xi. in Romans are a closely connected argument, but the feeling that has been gathering as it is being developed must find expression in the adoration of the Divine wisdom in chap. xi. 33-36.

(ii.) But, further, is it not possible that the

completion of an argument may be interrupted by an outburst of emotion? Rom. ix. 1-5 might possibly end in a doxology. The recital of God's goodness to His people, culminating in the human descent of Christ, might fill Paul with an overflowing gratitude which must find expression. As in some of Browning's poems the succession is of moods rather than of ideas, so in the Bible we must not look for logical connection only.

5. As in the Scriptures we have poetry as well as prose, the imagination needs to be exercised to recover the context.

(i.) Take Hosea xiv. Read it as a prose sermon and it is unintelligible, but treat it as a dramatic poem and it gains both in truth and beauty. First the prophet appeals to Israel to return to God, and even suggests the words of penitence that are to be used (vers. 1-3). Then he represents Jehovah as promising forgiveness and blessing to His repentant people (vers. 4-7). Then the people renounces its idolatry. "What have I to do any more with idols?" Jehovah repeats His assurance: "I have answered and will regard him." The people, too confident of the prosperity that will result from penitence, utters its boast: "I am like a green fir-tree." Jehovah rebukes the confidence in self and calls to reliance on God: "From me is thy fruit found" (ver. 8).

(ii.) In Psa. lxxxiv. the imagination must reproduce the situation implied to give the poem its full significance. The pilgrim catches his first glimpse of Jerusalem and the temple and expresses his delight (ver. 1) and his longing to be in the temple (ver. 2). Arrived in the temple, he feels it is his home, as the bird's is its nest (ver. 3). Observing the priests at their ministrations, he pronounces them happy (ver. 4). One of the priests assures him that he, too, who has made his pilgrimage to Zion is happy (vers. 5-7). The pilgrim then offers his prayer, and does not forget the priest (vers. 8-9). Conscious that his time to depart has come, he expresses his regret, his preference for the lowliest office in the temple to the highest position among those who care not for Zion (ver. 10). But, reminded of the priest's benediction, he takes comfort that, though he is leaving the temple, God's goodness does not fail or forsake him (ver. 11). Then he once more praises God that not worship in God's temple is the sole condition of God's blessing, but faith in God (ver. 12). Thus we recover the context, in relation to which any verse in it must be interpreted.

## VI

### THE LITERARY CHARACTER OF A WRITING

#### A. OLD TESTAMENT.

IT has been pointed out that the context of any text or passage is threefold—the *immediate*, the *proximate*, and the *ultimate*, or the paragraph, the book, and the Bible. It has also been shown that the connections of the immediate context are varied—*historical*, as the occasion of a parable; *logical*, as in prophetic discourses, and apostolic letters; *literary*, as in the implicit reference in the contents of one of Paul's letters to a letter received by him; *emotional*, as in some apostolic doxologies; or *imaginative*, as in poetic devotional or prophetic writings. In passing now to the proximate context, or the book in which the text or passage we are studying is found, there are at least three questions which we must ask our-

selves, and to which we must get as full and clear an answer as we can.

First of all we must recognise what is the literary character of the writing with which we are dealing, for a method of interpretation that is applicable to one kind of literature is quite inapplicable to another, and in determining this we must never allow ourselves to forget that the literary fashions of one land or one age are not the same as of another, and that consequently our modern standards of literary method must not be applied to these ancient Scriptures.

Secondly, we must recognise that each writer has his own personal characteristics of literary style, intellectual method, emotional mood and temperament, religious experience ; and here, again, we must make full allowance for distance in time and difference in race from ourselves.

Lastly, each writing has its distinctive, determinative historical occasion, purpose, and environment ; and we must therefore study the *historical conditions* as well as the *personal characteristics* and *literary character* of each book.

2. Confining ourselves now to the first of these three studies, the *literary character*, let us pass in review the different kinds of writings which we meet with in our Bible. In the *Old Testament*

we have *legal*, *historical*, *reflective*, *devotional*, *prophetic*, and *apocalyptic* literature; in the New Testament *historical*, *didactic* (practical and doctrinal), with some *devotional* and *prophetic*, and one complete example of *apocalyptic* literature. The first collection of sacred writings, made by the Jews, consisted of the first five books of the Bible, and was called *the Law* (*Torah*); but these writings are not exclusively legal, and we must in them distinguish the legislation from the narrative in which it is framed. As regards the *legal* element in these writings, the following considerations must be kept in view.

First of all, as modern scholarship has shown, there are evidences of progress in ceremonial ordinances, moral standards and customs; and successive codes, adapted to each age, can be traced.

Secondly, this legislation is for the most part not innovation, but recognition and sanction of existing practices and maxims, some of which recent investigation has shown to be not peculiar to the Hebrew people, but common to them and kindred peoples. *Circumcision*, that peculiarity of which the Jew afterwards was so proud, is not only of the fathers (John vii. 22) of the Hebrew people, but is found among other races.

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Thirdly, the traditional maxims and the inherited practices are often given a fuller significance and a higher value. Thus sacrifice has in this literature a moral and a religious content that is not given to it in any other nation.

Fourthly, this progress from what is common to the Semitic family to what is distinctive of the Hebrew people was brought about by a long and painful historical discipline and development, and we must be on our guard not to ascribe to Moses legislation which historical inquiry can prove to have been due to a very much later age. It is in accordance with recognised custom for the authors of these writings to attribute to Moses, the first law-giver of the nation, all its subsequent legal developments.

Fifthly, in considering this legislation we must never lose sight of the principle laid down by our Lord in dealing with the law of divorce, that many customs and rites were suffered by God in His teaching and training of the people because of their "hardness of heart" (Matt. xix. 8). We must never forget that Christ fulfils ? the law (Matt. v. 17) by advancing beyond it, as in the instances He Himself gives in the same chapter, as in His exaltation of two isolated maxims of the law (Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18)

into the supreme principle of Christian religion and morality (Matt. xxii. 40), as in His decision regarding the rival claims of Jerusalem and Gerizim as places of worship by declaring that spiritual worship depends not on place (John iv. 21-24). As it is not likely, however, that lay preachers will set themselves the task of expounding the legal literature of the Old Testament, this topic need be pursued no further.

3. As regards the *historical* literature there is still much discussion, and we must here and now avoid being involved in this controversy. How far the narratives in the *Pentateuch* are to be regarded as historical, in the strict sense of the term, is a matter about which scholars greatly differ. There is more general agreement that the narratives in *Samuel* and *Kings* are substantially historical. The Book of *Chronicles* is commonly regarded as a re-statement of the history from the standpoint of a later age, so distinctively legal and ritual as to be incapable of estimating justly and truly the men and the measures of earlier times, when neither law nor ritual were so fully developed. While the narratives of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, dealing with contemporary events in which they played a part, are accepted, the sketch of the previous history, dealing with the return from exile and

the rebuilding of the temple, is now a subject of debate. Personally inclined to the more conservative attitude on these questions, I am content to leave the decision of all these matters to those who, by expert knowledge, are entitled to authoritative judgment. For our present purpose it will suffice to offer some general considerations.

First of all, the methods of composition of ancient historians are not our own; they combine together different oral traditions or literary records without always harmonising their sources, and so give us sometimes inconsistent accounts of the same events—as, for instance, the introduction of David to Saul (compare 1 Sam. xvi. 14–23, and xvii. 55–58). They judge and praise or blame the persons, policies, and practices of a former age in accordance with the standards and customs of their own, as the Chronicler in his treatment of the Kings of Judah in their relation to the temple ritual. Their narrative often reflects the moral ideals of their own period rather than the principles and practices of the time with which they are dealing, as the story of the patriarchs told in Genesis.

Secondly, the moral value and religious significance of their narratives does not depend for us on their strict historical accuracy. As

in Christ's parables the truth and profit of His teaching does not depend on His dealing with facts only, so in these stories the moral and religious lessons for our guidance and encouragement remain, even if we should be compelled to admit that the narratives are less historical than we have hitherto believed them to be. We are not called to any slavish imitation of the saints or heroes of old, and it is not necessary for us, therefore, to know with absolute accuracy what they said and did. The authors of these books write from a moral and religious standpoint which has its significance and value for us, whether they are simply stating facts or presenting their own standards and sentiments for our spiritual discernment. When we are seeking illustrations and confirmations of moral and religious principles in these narratives—and that, after all, is their practical importance for us—it is not at all necessary that we should raise the question of historical accuracy.

Lastly, we must test all standards and sentiments presented in these narratives by the mind and spirit of Christ. Without blaming the writers because they fall short of Christ's perfection, we must see to it that by following their guidance we should not miss the goal He has set before us.

4. In what is known as the *Wisdom* literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) we find what is the nearest approach to be found in the Old Testament to what we call philosophy—a reflection on the problems of the world and man, of duty and destiny. In *Proverbs* we have for the most part popular *ethics* from a standpoint which is predominantly, if not exclusively, prudential—a condemnation of sin on account of its penalties, and a commendation of virtue in view of its rewards. While we must habitually maintain the standpoint of moral obligation and religious aspiration to which these maxims occasionally rise, they may be still profitably studied as practical *wisdom*. *Job* must be studied as sublime poetry which expresses profound philosophy. It must not be treated as throughout a direct revelation of the Divine mind and will; it is human speculation on the problem of the suffering of the righteous, which does not in the book itself find any Divine solution, for the conclusion of the book is that man must submit to the inscrutable wisdom and irresistible power of God. To study it as a theological treatise, an authoritative interpretation of the world and man, duty and destiny, is to miss its meaning. Its message is the mystery of life and the practical wisdom of following our religious intuition—that we must

trust the God whom we cannot trace. This purpose of the whole book must determine our interpretation of every part of it. To accept the estimate of life offered in *Ecclesiastes*, or the moderation in piety as well as morality which the book enjoins, would be to make a serious mistake and to do a grievous wrong. It is an interesting study of how dark the world and how empty life becomes to the man who starts out on the pursuit of pleasure, and does not make God his chief good. It serves as a foil to the joy of God's saints in His salvation.

5. When we turn from the reflective to the *devotional* literature, as found in the *Psalms*, we find ourselves confronted with seemingly conflicting phenomena. While there are many Psalms which express so simply and purely religious emotion, permanent and universal, that all that is needful for their understanding is the religious life itself, there are others which we should understand very much better than we now do were we more familiar with their historical occasion; and yet their historical allusions are often so vague that there are on the one hand scholars who refer very many of the Psalms to the Maccabæan period, and on the other scholars who are doubtful whether there are any Maccabæan Psalms. The titles are of so much later date than, and often so inconsistent in

their statements with the contents of, the Psalms themselves, that they are not to be taken as offering any sure clue to the interpretation. However gratifying to the taste for local and personal colour it may be to illustrate many of the *Psalms* by the history of David, there are other features in these alleged Davidic Psalms which forbid any such reference.

(i.) Psa. li., for instance, in the moral need and religious faith which it expresses, in its advanced reflection on God's preference for the broken and contrite heart rather than sacrifice and offering, very clearly indicates the prophetic teaching of the eighth and seventh centuries. For the interpretation of the Psalms especially, it is very necessary to have a wide knowledge of and a keen insight into the progress of religious thought and life in the Hebrew people.

(ii.) The last aspiration of Psa. xvii. 15, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness," sounds in our ears a plain statement of a certain resurrection and of a beatific vision ; but when we look at the context there is nothing in it to suggest a reference to a future life, as it is present preservation and vindication that the Psalmist pleads for. If the psalm is of relatively early date, the gradual development of the faith in a future life of glory and blessedness for God's saints forbids our assuming any reference

to an awakening from the sleep of death to behold God as He is not known on earth ; an intimate communion with God daily renewed on earth is what the Psalmist claims for his satisfaction. If the psalm belongs to a late age, then it is not improbable that his faith in God's present help and comfort suddenly soars aloft into the hope of a fuller knowledge of God in the future life.

(iii.) The Psalms are poetry, and yet even the imagination has its local and temporal conditions. and so the Psalms abound in allusions to the Psalmist's own surroundings. The dweller in a city, who is not familiar with country ways, cannot fully gain the meaning of the twenty-third psalm. A knowledge of the scenery of the pasture grounds of Judaea makes the imagery of the Psalm more vivid. The changed imagery in the last two verses can be appreciated only by him who knows something of the terror of the fugitive from the blood-avenger, and of the generosity of Arab hospitality.

(iv.) An emotional sympathy is often essential to the interpretation of a psalm. The imprecatory Psalms justly and fitly offend the Christian conscience ; but if we realise that the hatred for external enemies which some express is the inevitable consequence of the fervent and intense patriotism of the Psalmist, or the anger uttered

in others against apostates and traitors within the nation itself, who seem ready to betray the cause of Jehovah Himself, is the reverse side of deep devotion to, and keen enthusiasm for, that cause, the mood will not be so unintelligible.

6. An error from which modern scholarship has most happily delivered us is that prophetic literature is mainly *predictive*. There are predictions in the prophetic literature, as the announcement of the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 by Amos and Hosea, the assurance of Jerusalem's deliverance from the army of Assyria in 701 by Isaiah, the promise of Cyrus' succour of the exiles in 538 by the great prophet of the Exile. There are in Isaiah and Micah definite predictions of a Messiah, a Prince of the House of David, which have been not literally, but transcendently, fulfilled by Jesus Christ. There is the aspiration and ideal of the Servant of Jehovah in Isa. lii. 12–liii. 11, satisfied and realised in the Saviour and Lord alone. But, on the one hand, we cannot follow even the writers of the New Testament in describing as a fulfilment of prophecy every coincidence between a statement of the Old Testament and an event in our Lord's life when the original context gives not the slightest indication that any such reference is intended. And, on the other hand, we must

accept the view of their work taken by the prophets themselves. They were preachers to their own times ; if they uttered warnings of future judgment, or gave promises of future deliverances, it was to produce present penitence and amendment, and their warnings as their promises were always conditional ; penitence might avert judgment, amendment hasten deliverance. Their teaching is often poetic in form ; imagery is used freely ; general principles are stated in concrete instances ; parable, allegory, symbol in word and deed have all a place in their rhetorical method. They cannot, therefore, be prosaically interpreted, but the ethical law and the spiritual truth must be detached from its literary expression, as the kernel from the husk.

(i.) Hosea, in the second chapter of his prophecy, is led by his own personal experience to present the revelation of Jehovah to Israel in an allegory dealing with an unfaithful wife's treatment by her forgiving husband.

(ii.) Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is not to be taken as fact, but as vivid and forceful imagery, expressing the apparently helpless and hopeless position of the people in Exile, and the certainty of a Divine restoration and revival of the national existence. But, if poetic in form, the teaching is historic in its context. The prophets are the interpreters of the events of their

own time. They set forth their Divine meaning and aim. To understand the prophets we must know the history of their times. In recent years our knowledge of that history has been immensely extended. The Hebrew records are now supplemented by Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian annals preserved in various forms. Without the guidance this knowledge offers the prophets are incomprehensible ; with it their meaning becomes plain. Hence the history must be known, if the prophecy is to be understood.

(7) In the Book of *Ezekiel* a new method of writing begins, although his style is mainly prophetic; in the Book of *Zechariah* this new method is also found. The earliest Jewish canon did not include the Book of *Daniel* among the prophetic writings, and its place in our English Bible hides from us the fact that is the one example in the Old Testament, as the *Revelation* is in the New Testament, of this distinct kind of literature, generally called the *Apocalyptic*. So long as these two books were the only ones of their kind known to scholars the principles for their interpretation could not be certainly or accurately defined; but we have now recovered a number of other writings of the same class, and the study of them is making this literary method much more intelligible. These apocalypses are not prophecies of the events to be

looked for at the end of the world, as is assumed by so many interpreters. They seek to interpret the Divine purpose in human history. The history of the past is presented, as well as contemporary events and their probable immediate issues, in symbolic forms, which are intentionally so obscure that only the instructed and sympathetic reader can grasp their meaning.

(i.) Daniel, for instance, represents the great empires with which God's people had been brought into contact in the guise of beasts. Contemporary events, the efforts of *Antiochus Epiphanes* to paganise the Jewish people, and the resistance of the pious and patriotic party to this effort, are described in so figurative language that only those who had the key to the interpretation could understand the allusions.

(ii.) So the *Revelation* deals with the persecution of the Christian Church by the Roman Empire, and the expectation so passionately cherished by the persecuted of the destruction of the Empire and the deliverance of the Church in terms that would not betray the secret of the Christian hopes to their persecutors. A practical necessity of concealment led the apocalyptic writers to adopt more extravagant, arbitrary, and mysterious symbolism than the prophets, who had no such need of hiding their meaning.

from all but a few, ever used. The practical necessity set a literary fashion which was followed further than was absolutely necessary. A general study of these apocalypses shows that there were certain conventional methods, as, for instance, the representation of names by numbers, of persons by beasts, and it is necessary to be familiar with these conventions to interpret these writings correctly. Without now dwelling on the other features which distinguished apocalypse and prophecy, we must emphasise this distinction, as to ignorance and neglect of it is due the folly and extravagance of most of the expositions offered of *Daniel* and *Revelation*.

## B. NEW TESTAMENT.

Turning to the New Testament, the *historical* literature first claims our notice. It is not confined to the *Gospels* and the *Acts*, as the *Epistles* abound in allusions which are of the greatest importance for our study of the external circumstances and the internal conditions of the Early Christian Church.

(i.) In 1 Cor. xv. 1-8, for instance, we have one of the most trustworthy, and certainly the earliest testimony to the appearances of Christ after the resurrection.

(ii.) In Gal. i. and ii. we have an authoritative account of the controversy regarding the admission of the Gentiles to the Christian Church.

(iii.) To the first Epistle of John we owe our knowledge of the incipient Gnosticism which denied the reality of the Incarnation, asserted the superiority of knowledge, and minimised the guilt of sin.

2. But in these writings the history is secondary, not primary, in intention. In the *Synoptists* (the name given to the writers of the first three Gospels, owing to the large measure of agreement in their records of the life and teaching of Jesus) the purpose is historical.

(i.) These three writers, it is now generally agreed, were dependent on two sources for their materials—the *Notes of Peter's Preaching*, of which the Gospel according to *Mark* consists almost, if not altogether, and the collection of *Sayings of Jesus*, probably more completely presented in its original form in the Gospel according to *Matthew* than in the Gospel according to *Luke*, although both set the Sayings in a framework supplied by the other source. That other sources, oral and written, may have been used is probable. It is coming now to be more generally admitted among critics that these sources are trustworthy as substantially

historical. In spite of the common sources, we do not find absolute agreement; but the discrepancies are altogether insignificant, and do not depreciate the value of the Gospels as historical records.

(ii.) There are differences due to the different purposes, and consequently methods, of the editors. *Matthew*, for instance, lays stress on the fulfilment of prophecy in the life of Jesus; *Mark* dwells on the impression Jesus made as Son of God on the eye- and ear-witnesses of the ministry; *Luke* delights in the words and works of Jesus as displaying grace to the poor, the outcast, the fallen. When the evangelical narratives differ, no general rule about the preference of one or another can be laid down. In *Mark* probably there is least editorial change; the distinct historical setting *Luke* gives many sayings which in *Matthew* are found embedded in discourses is in many cases probably historical. But each passage must be carefully studied by itself, with these two guiding principles: What is it most likely that Jesus would have said or done in the given circumstances? and, What change in the record is the evangelist likely to have made from his own distinctive standpoint? To take an illustration, let us compare Matt. v. 3, 4, 6, and Luke vi. 20, 21. Did what is regarded as *Luke's Ebionitism*, his

belief in poverty as spiritually advantageous, lead him to give a literal sense to words Jesus used figuratively, or did *Matthew's* recognition of the dangers of this *Ebionitism* lead him so to change the language as to bring out clearly what he regarded as its spiritual significance? Did Jesus command poverty without qualification, leaving it to those whom He addressed to discover the implicit reference to the spiritual condition to which it is more favourable than riches, or did He guard Himself from the very first against misconception? The probability seems to me, applying the two principles, that Luke's version is to be preferred to Matthew's.

(iii.) In recent years it has been contended that the Gospels often reflect the historical circumstances of the period of their composition rather than reproduce the historical situation of the period of which they profess to give a record. Matt. xvi. 18-19 and xviii. 15-20 (the references to the Church), and Matt. xxviii. 18-20 (the commission to baptize the nations in the threefold name), are held to be beyond Jesus' own horizon, and to indicate the belief and practice of the Church in a later age. But here again two guiding principles are to be adopted: Is it likely that Jesus could and did anticipate some of the future conditions of His community so as to afford the necessary guidance and coun-

sel? Is it likely that the impression on the writers of their immediate environment would in so important matters be more potent than the memory, carefully cherished, of what Jesus had taught? The first question I should be inclined to answer affirmatively, and the second negatively. The impress of Christ's character and authority is so evident in the Gospels as to demand our confidence.

(iv.) In the study of the Gospels we must guard against the assumption that the immediate literary context is also the original historical context. The Gospels are not arranged chronologically; even in *Mark*, which indicates more clearly than the others the course of our Lord's ministry, the arrangement is *topical*. For instance, in *Mark* i. 21–45 we have a group of miracles, and in chaps. ii. 1—iii. 6 a group of incidents, in which Jesus comes into conflict with the Pharisees. We must sometimes try, by our historical discernment, to recover the historical situation. The treatment of the Syrophœnician woman by Jesus is inexplicable, unless we assume that it was His method of rebuking the Jewish exclusiveness of His disciples, who had probably previously protested against His visiting a Gentile district. We must thus very often look below the surface for suggestion in interpreting the Gospels, and

the ability to do this depends on long and loving study of them.

3. As regards *John's Gospel*, it must be remembered that in it history and theology are wedded. We cannot always confidently affirm when the evangelist's report passes into his reflections, and it is not at all improbable that he himself could not always have separated the thoughts he remembered from the thoughts that were suggested to him as he meditated on the Master's teaching. To take only one example, in *John iii.* report does pass into reflection, but is uncertain at what point. The Revised Version division of paragraphs indicates that the evangelist's comment begins with verse 16. A very close study of the incident leads one to the conclusion that verse 10 contains Jesus' last words to Nicodemus—His grieved dismissal. But the problems of this Gospel, as well as of the *Acts*, are so complex that the student cannot hope to deal with them without the aid of scholars who are thoroughly competent to explain them; and, therefore, no more need now be said about the method of studying these writings.

4. When we turn to the didactic portions of the New Testament, Jesus' teaching first claims consideration. We must become familiar with His method.

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(i.) He is concrete, and not abstract ; He lays down general principles in giving special illustrations of them, and we might even add the extreme instances of their application, as in what He says about retaliation (Matt. v. 38-42). He states the truth in figurative language. He does not argue, but affirms. The proverb is not uncommon.

(ii.) The parables especially are liable to misrepresentation. It may be said generally that each parable is intended to illustrate and enforce one truth, and that its details are significant only as completing the story. We need not ask ourselves in what respects God can be likened to the unjust judge, since the story is told only to teach the lesson of importunity in prayer (Luke xviii. 1-8). The dishonesty of the prudent steward need not be a moral problem to us, as it is his wisdom alone that Jesus lays stress on (Luke xvi. 8).

(iii.) But while this is the general rule, there are parables in which we cannot avoid the impression that Jesus intended even the subordinate details to be suggestive. The parable of the sower does not teach only the variety of the impression made and influence wielded by Jesus' ministry, but each kind of soil suggests a type of hearer (Matt. xiii. 1-23). The material used in the parable of the prodigal (Luke xv.

11–32) involves that it does not teach us merely that God welcomes the sinner, but suggests much about the nature of God and of man, of sin and of penitence, of pardon and blessedness. We must, however, always distinguish what a parable directly teaches and what it less directly suggests, and must beware of putting fancies for facts.

5. When we turn to the apostolic writings, teaching is presented to us in a much less poetic form.

(i.) In Paul's letters there is much argument, and we must become familiar with his logical method. His appeal to the Scriptures especially has peculiarities that demand a close scrutiny. In the *Introduction* to the *Epistle to the Romans* (Century Bible) I have tried to give some account of his logical method and literary style (pp. 26–39), but cannot here pursue the subject any further.

(ii.) The *Epistle to the Hebrews* illustrates the allegorical method current especially in the schools of Alexandria; and in this writing the method rests on the basis of the Platonic doctrine of ideas. Both the method adopted and the doctrine assumed must be understood for the interpretation of the *Epistle*.

(iii.) In the *Johannine* writings the structure of sentences is very simple, and the progress

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of the thought may be said to consist in closer definition and fuller description of significant words. In the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel the terms "Word," "life," "light," are the hinges on which the discussion hangs and turns. Thus in the didactic portions of the New Testament the personality of the writer shows itself in logical method and literary style.

6. There is no book in the New Testament corresponding to the Book of Psalms in the Old, but there are some instances of praise and prayer in the historical writings, and the Epistles present doctrine not divorced from, but inspired by, devotion. Nearest in literary character to the *Psalms* are the songs of praise of Zacharias (Luke i. 68-79), Mary (chap. i. 46-55), the heavenly host (chap. ii. 14), Simeon (chap. ii. 29-32), the content as well as the form of which is in accord more with the old than the new revelation. Of sacred interest for us are the prayers of Jesus (Matt. xi. 25-26; xxvi. 39-42), and the prayer He taught His disciples. A glimpse into the devotions of the primitive Church is given us in Acts iv. 24-30. The doxologies in Paul's Epistles express the spirit of prayer and praise in which he wrote. Fragments of Christian hymns probably are to be found in Eph. v. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 9; but we have not the hymn-book of the Early

Christian Church, as we have of the Jewish temple.

7. As the New Testament records and interprets the fulfilment of law and prophecy by Christ, prophetic literature in the narrower sense of prediction is very rare. But some of our Lord's teaching is prophetic in character, as when in parables He lays down the principles of the Kingdom of God, which will find their full application only in the future (the parable of the tares, mustard-seed, leaven, net with fishes—Matt. xiii. 24–33, 47–50); or when He warns His disciples of the persecutions that await them (Matt. x. 16–42); or when He announces the fall of Jerusalem and the Second Advent (Matt. xxiv.); or when He promises the Spirit to His disciples (John xiv., xv., xvi; Acts i. 4–5). Paul also looks into the future. He describes the final victory of Christ over death and His final subjection unto God (1 Cor. xv. 20–28), and the nature and process of the Resurrection (vers. 35–55). He anticipates a conflict before the victory (2 Thess. ii. 1–12). He foresees and forewarns the Ephesian elders against the entrance of false teachers into the Church (Acts xx. 29). How soon these forebodings were justified is shown by 2 Peter and Jude as well as 1 John. Regarding our Lord's eschatological teaching there is a very

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serious difficulty of interpretation, as He declares on the one hand that these things will come to pass within this generation, and on the other hand that not even the Son knows the day and the hour, and the contradiction can be removed only by assuming that He clearly distinguished, although the evangelists in their reports have not, the fall of Jerusalem, regarding the time of which He was certain, and the second coming of the Son of Man, about the date of which He confessed His own ignorance. In studying these discourses we must always keep this distinction before us. As regards the predictions of the fall of Jerusalem we have now the commentary of history. As regards the more remote and mysterious event, we have no such help to our understanding. It is evident that the Early Christian Church lived in the eager expectation of an early return of Christ to earth in outward power and glory. Paul himself expected to see that day (1 Thess. iv. 13-18; 1 Cor. xv. 51), and he has to warn the Thessalonians against the excitement and disorder which that too eager expectation caused (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12), and to explain to them that there must be some delay (2 Thess. ii. 1-12). Afterwards he anticipated his own death, and looked for a reunion with the Lord in heaven. That hope has not been

fulfilled in accordance with these expectations, and we are warranted in asking, in view of other utterances of our Lord, as in the parables already referred to, and the confirmation of these utterances by Christian history, whether the mysterious discourse of our Lord, so far as it relates to His Second Advent, should be taken not prosaically, but as a pictorial representation of the progress and the triumph of His Kingdom by His Spiritual Presence and Power. In our study of the New Testament we must always remember that this eager expectation of the Early Church was not fulfilled literally, and that the facts of Christian history suggest that our Lord's words, as their form allows, are to be taken figuratively. It is quite certain that the uninformed and inexperienced interpreter is almost sure to go astray, if he attempts to explain any of the predictive passages of the New Testament, and even the most competent scholar cannot claim certainty for his views.

8. The distinctive features of apocalyptic literature have been already indicated, and all that need now be done is to remind you that the Revelation is the example of this class of writing in the New Testament, as Daniel is in the Old. The passage already referred to (2 Thess. ii. 1-12), in which Paul deals with

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the Man of Sin, who is now being restrained, but will yet be manifested, only to be destroyed by Christ, is apocalyptic in form rather than strictly prophetic. Contemporary history, the relation of the Christian Church to Judaism on the one hand, and to the Roman Empire on the other, alone can afford the clue to guide through this labyrinth, as through that of the Book of the *Revelation*. As regards this last book, it is to be noted that the *Letters to the Seven Churches* are not of the same apocalyptic character, although the language is often so figurative, and we know so little about the conditions of the Churches addressed that we cannot always fully understand the allusions: yet that recent research may throw much light on dark places Professor Ramsay's volume on the *Letters to the Seven Churches* shows.

## VII

### THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WRITER

HAVING considered the literary character of a writing, we must next try to find out all we can about the personal characteristics of the writer. Although it is the same Spirit of God who enlightens and quickens the minds and hearts of the authors of the Holy Scriptures, yet there are diversities of operations, and the Spirit's working is conditioned by the experience, character, temperament, and talents of each writer. It is this that gives the variety amid the unity of spirit and purpose in the Bible; for the Bible not only reveals the one God, but it also reveals the many men to whom, in divers manners and in divers portions, God spoke. And these many men are worth knowing not only for themselves, but because in their differences we may discover the fullness and the manifoldness of the grace of God in moulding men according to His will.

2. It need hardly be said that even the teaching of Jesus cannot have for us its full significance and value unless we interpret it in relation to the Person. His infallible spiritual discernment, His certain moral judgment, His perfect moral character are all reflected in His sayings; but what we often fail to look for, and therefore to find, is His intensely affectionate heart, His vivid emotional nature. A false conception of His nature, in which His humanity is not adequately recognised, has led many to ignore the evidences the Gospels afford of an inner life of deep, strong feeling. Wonder, surprise, delight, disappointment, perplexity, uncertainty—all these emotions were experienced by Him; and His emotional mood is often the clue to the meaning and aim of a saying. His rebuke of Peter (Matt. xvi. 23) is explicable only if He was feeling the strain of the temptation to spare Himself; His severity to His mother (John ii. 4) only if He felt His personal relationship to be a possible danger and hindrance to His public ministry; displeasure at His disciples' Jewish exclusiveness explains the apparent harshness of His words to the Syrophœnician mother (Matt. xv. 26).

3. When we turn to Paul, the personal characteristics are so prominent in all the

writings as to compel attention; but if we are to understand these writings there must be appreciation of, as well as attention to, the personal characteristics.

(i.) To know Christ is to love, for we must needs love the highest when we see it; but there are not a few persons whom Paul on first acquaintance may repel rather than attract. His experience is so unlike theirs that they often fail to do justice to its intensity and reality. His conflict with the Judaisers is so remote from present dangers of the Christian Church that the vehemence of his controversial language may seem excessive and unwarranted. The necessity of his employing evidences and arguments to confute, if he could not convince, his opponents, which do not in the same degree appeal to us, may conceal from us the importance of the issue for the Christian faith, and may lead us to depreciate the service he rendered to the Christian Church.

(ii.) To take only one of these points for illustration. His Gospel cannot be understood without an insight, kindly as well as keen, into his own experience, and happily his letters abound in personal revelations. He describes the Pharisaic contentment (Phil. iii. 4-6); his discovery of his own moral impotence to purify his heart and keep it clean from evil desires

(Rom. vii. 9–11); his consequent misery and intense desire for deliverance (ver. 24); his unexpected and violent conversion by the appearance of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 8); the inward revelation which subsequently was given to him (Gal. i. 16); his complete separation from his former life (Gal. vi. 14; Phil. iii. 7); his penetration into the meaning of the Cross, and his passionate attachment to it (Gal. vi. 14; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24); the intimacy of his communion and the immediateness of his union with the living Christ (Rom. vi. 4–6; Gal. ii. 20; Phil. iii. 8–11); his desire for progress (vers. 12–14); his longing to be with Christ (Phil. i. 21–23).

4. The *Gospel of John* is a great difficulty to Christian scholarship. The teaching of Jesus is there presented in forms so unlike those to be found in the Synoptists, that the differences of time and place which may be assumed do not afford an adequate explanation. Yet on the other hand we cannot resist the impression that in the Gospel we are in contact with a disciple of Jesus, who is giving us his reminiscences, although their form has in many cases been determined by his own reflections. He had meditated long and lovingly on the teaching that he had received; by the Spirit of Truth, promised by the Master, he had been led to

discover new meanings in the words; the truths he had heard from the lips of Jesus Himself, and the truths that he had been taught by the Spirit, who took the things of Christ and revealed their full significance to him, were so blended together in his own mind, that when he wrote he could not keep apart his reminiscences and his reflections. That seems to be the key to the interpretation of this Gospel.

5. Even in the Synoptic Gospels there are personal characteristics, although the reports of Christ's life and teaching are less evidently influenced by these. For *Matthew* the dominating interest is the fulfilment of prophecy in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is a Jew writing for Jews. *Mark* is neither as Jewish as *Matthew* nor as Gentile as *Luke*; it is the evidence in the works of Jews and the impression made by these works on men in support of the claims as Son of God which he graphically presents. *Luke*, though using *Jewish* sources, is the most *Gentile* of the evangelists; the Gospel of Paul has determined his standpoint; and it is the grace of Christ on which he lays stress; he is most compassionate and sympathetic towards the fallen, the outcast, the poor, and the miserable, and for him Christ's ministry of help and healing affords the evi-

dence for the grace of Christ which the influence of Paul had taught him so to prize.

6. In the Law and the Histories of the Old Testament we do not find so clearly the traces of the personal characteristics of the writers. But in the prophetic writings we are brought into very close contact with living men. The moral sternness of an *Amos* is in striking contrast to the religious tenderness of a *Hosea*. *Hosea's* revelation of God as suffering, punishing, forgiving love has its source in his own personal experience, which he records for us in the first and third chapters of his book, and applies allegorically in the second chapter to the relation of Jehovah and Israel. Had his own heart not been broken by the faithlessness of his wife, he would not have known how great a grief to God the sin of man is. Had he not waited patiently for his wife's return to love and loyalty, he could not have been so confident that God would forgive. Had he not been constrained to so deal with his wife that she might be brought to penitence, he would not have understood the meaning and aim of God's judgments.

7. *Micah*, the countryman with a keen sense of the wrongs of the poor and the sins of the rich, with an aversion for the ostentation and luxury of the great city, expects the destruction

of Jerusalem (chap. iii. 12), and looks for the deliverer to the small, lowly village of Bethlehem (chap. v. 2). *Isaiah*, the citizen of Jerusalem, moving among the governing circles of the capital, with free access to the King, wielding an influence that even his opponents had to recognise, no less denounces the oppression and indulgence of the rich ; but hopes for a prince of the house of David as Emmanuel (chap. vii. 14, 15) even in the evil days of an Ahaz ; and in the better days of a Hezekiah co-operates with him in the work of reform, however partial. As he is confident that in Jerusalem itself there is a remnant, faithful and devoted, a holy seed which will be the stock of the nation restored after the inevitable judgment (chap. vi. 13), he is confident that Jerusalem will be delivered from the besieging hosts of Assyria (chap. x. 24), a confidence justified by the event.

8. As for *Habakkuk*, *Judah* was more righteous than wicked *Babylon*. It was an insoluble problem for his faith that *Babylon* should be the instrument of Jehovah's judgment on *Judah* (chap. i. 13), and he confidently anticipates *Babylon*'s destruction (chap. ii). *Jeremiah*, his contemporary, was so impressed with the sin of his people, with the necessity of the Divine judgment, that it was no perplexity to him that God should use even *Babylon* for the fulfilment

of His righteous purpose. He exposed himself to the charge of treason to his country by his insistence on the duty of humble submission to the Divine judgment of which Babylon was the instrument. Yet, as he passionately loved his country, it was an unspeakable grief to him to be the messenger of its doom. We must sympathise with the conflicting emotions of *Jeremiah* if we are to understand his broken utterances. His temperament more than his intellect explains his writings.

9. The priestly sympathies and interests of *Ezekiel* make intelligible to us much in his writings that distinguishes his spirit and purpose from that dominant in most of the prophetic writings. The close contact with a highly developed and fully organised heathenism which the residence in Babylon of the great Prophet of the Exile involved, accounts for the confident certainty of his monotheism and his vehement contempt for idolatry (*Isa. xl. 12–26*). The wider intercourse with other nations in Babylon was a condition of his missionary ideal and enthusiasm (*Isa. lxi*). In the writings of *Haggai* and *Zechariah*, of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, we may also trace these dispositions and character, the influence of their environment upon them. But the subject need not be pursued further, as sufficient indications have been given

of the advantage of carefully studying the personal characteristics of the writer of any book of the Bible we want to understand for ourselves, or to use for the instruction of others.

## VIII

### THE HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

**I**F we cannot separate the writing from the writer, just as little can we separate the writer from his surroundings in his own age.

(i.) Revelation is not in word only, but in deed; the illumination of God within interprets the providence of God without; our faith rests on facts as the proofs and the means of God's grace in saving and blessing. Hebrew prophecy cannot be separated from Hebrew history; the Christian Gospel is bound to the events which Christmas, Easter, Pentecost commemorate.

(ii.) But not only are historical circumstances embraced in the content of the Divine revelation, the personal characteristics of the writer and the literary character of the writing can be fully understood only as we know the historical environment influencing the one and the historical occasion determining the other.

2. Probably one of the most prominent and

important features in the modern method of the study of the Bible is the stress laid on history. Many are advocating the historical method as alone legitimate in theology, and such books as Gardner's "A Historic View of the New Testament," Moffatt's "The Historical New Testament," and Harnack's "The Essence of Christianity," are notable examples of this method. Without committing ourselves in any way to the somewhat excessive emphasis laid on the historical conditions in these writings, and recognising more fully than these seem to do the inward determination of the writers of the New Testament by the Spirit of God, we cannot but recognise that the most significant and valuable work of scholarship in relation to the Bible in recent times has been in illuminating the literature by the history of the agents of Revelation.

3. As I do not wish to introduce unnecessarily matters of current controversy, I shall not enter on the discussion of the theory specially associated with the name of Wellhausen in Germany and Robertson Smith in Britain, but cannot refrain from mentioning it in passing. According to this theory, the Pentateuch, in its legal portions, contains several codes of law, each of which can be definitely connected with a period of the national history; the Book of the Cove-

nant with the time of the Kings, antecedent to the prophetic activity; the Book of Deuteronomy with Josiah's reformation in 621; the Law of Holiness with Ezekiel, and the Exile; the Priestly Law with the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah 444. It is maintained that the contents of each of these codes and their differences from one another are made more intelligible by regarding them as not only successive, but progressive, conditioned at each stage and in each phase by historical circumstances.

4. It is the prophetic writings, however, which have gained most by a historical treatment. We are able to bring these writings now into connection not only with the history recorded in Kings, &c., but with the wider history of the empires by which the fortunes of Israel and Judah were being determined during this period; the monuments and tablets, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, are making clear to us much that the Hebrew records by themselves do not enable us to understand.

(i.) We now know so much about the outward prosperity, accompanied by an inward corruption, of the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam II. as to interpret aright the denunciations and the warnings of doom of Amos.

(ii.) The anarchy after his death, accompanied by the frequent interference of Assyria, is now

more intelligible to us, and Hosea's obscurity, if not quite removed, is in some measure relieved.

(iii.) Isaiah was statesman not in spite, but because, of his calling as a prophet. His connection with the Court at Jerusalem led him not only to formulate general principles of righteousness and faith, but also to apply them in counsel he offered regarding internal administration and foreign relations. With a keener political insight than the foolish and weak King Ahaz, he saw that the intervention of Assyria in the affairs of the kingdoms on its western borders, which the king in his terror desired to invite, was a far greater danger than the invasion of Judah threatened by Israel in alliance with Syria; hence his remonstrances with Ahaz (chap. vii. 1-9); the significance of the sign he gives (the child Immanuel, vers. 10-17) is determined on the one hand by the character of Ahaz, and on the other by the circumstances of Judah. It was more than political insight that was the source of his confidence in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the besieging armies of Assyria in 701 B.C.; it was his religious faith in Jehovah's purpose concerning the renewal of His people by means of the godly remnant (chaps. viii. 3, vi. 13); yet his prophecy in regard to this event gains fuller

meaning if we follow intelligently the course of the politics of Judah in relation to Assyria on the one hand and to Egypt on the other.

(iv.) The Scythian invasion of Western Asia, the fall of Assyria, the rivalry of Egypt and Babylon, the growing power of the latter, for which the former proved no match, these are all events of world-history forming the situation in which Jeremiah exercised his prophetic ministry, and to which his message had reference.

(v.) The course of events that led to the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus and the foundation of the Persian Empire, forms the historical background for the glowing visions of the Prophet of Exile (Isa. xl.-lxvi.). These are but a few illustrations of the close connection between history and prophecy.

5. Although our Lord's teaching and work have a permanent significance and universal value, yet even He cannot be altogether detached from local and temporary conditions.

(i.) Not the course of Jewish history alone determined the fullness of the times in which He came. The spread of Greek culture and language; the extension of Roman government, law, and order; the dispersion of many Jews among the Gentiles with the religious testimony they bore, and religious influence they wielded;

the failure of the religions of the ancient pagan world to meet religious and moral needs; the desire for a clearer faith and a purer life widely diffused, all were necessary conditions for the reception of a universal religion, revelation, redemption.

(ii.) Even if we confine ourselves to the narrower stage of our Lord's ministry, we must know and understand contemporary Judaism, if the form more than the content of His teaching and work is to be thoroughly intelligible to us.

6. Paul's letters are always dominated by a purpose, determined by their occasion. He never writes simply to exercise literary powers or gratify literary ambitions. The needs and the dangers of the Churches that he had founded are always the motives and the reasons of his letters.

(i.) Even the Epistle to the Romans, the most general in its treatment of the Christian Gospel which he preached, was written because he intended to visit Rome, and because the conditions of the Church were such as to require an exposition of his teaching in order to secure the favourable reception and the generous support in his further missionary enterprises that he desired.

(ii.) Galatians is incomprehensible if the con-

flict of the Judaisers with Paul regarding the conditions of the reception of the Gentiles into the Christian Church is not understood.

(iii.) The Epistles to the Corinthians, especially the second, offer so many problems to the student, because the allusions to the historical circumstances presupposed are so obscure ; and although every attempt to reconstruct the historical situation in Corinth and of Paul is only problematical, yet the expositor must assume one or other hypothesis, if he is to make anything of these writings.

(iv.) How much the *Epistle to Philippians* gains in meaning and worth, if we can realise the conditions of Paul's imprisonment in Rome and anticipation of an early trial, which might end in acquittal or the sentence of death, amid which it was written.

(v.) The *Pastoral Epistles* presuppose a release from the first Roman captivity, a period of missionary service, and a re-arrest followed by a second imprisonment—a course of events for which there is no other conclusive evidence ; and the problems they present to the scholar would be very much nearer solution if we could gain even a little clearer testimony than these afford regarding the last period of Paul's earthly pilgrimage.

7. The stage of the first scene in the history

of the Early Church as told in the New Testament was the Roman Empire. The spread and the growth of the Church depended primarily on the presence and power of the Spirit of God, but doctrine and practice, polity and cultus, were all influenced by the intellectual, moral, religious, nay, even the political, conditions of the world in which the Spirit in and through the Church dwelt and worked. No man has done as much as Prof. Ramsay has done in his books to bring this wider knowledge to bear on the interpretation of the New Testament. If we study the Acts of the Apostles, or the Epistle to the Galatians, or the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia under his guidance, I am confident we shall gain a certain conviction that we can understand the New Testament best, as we bring to our study of it the freshest and the widest knowledge which modern scholarship puts within our reach.

## IX

### THE HISTORY OF REVELATION

WE are now near to our goal. We have considered immediate and proximate context, and now we turn to the ultimate context—the history of revelation. In the Old and the New Testament we have the literature of the Divine revelation ; the old covenant is the promise of which the new is the fulfilment. Jesus claimed not to destroy but to fulfil the law and the prophets (Matt. v. 17) ; Paul declares that Christ is the yea and the Amen of the Divine promises (2 Cor. i. 20) ; and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews contrasts the partial revelation to the prophets with the perfect revelation to the Son (chap. i. 1, 2).

The connection of the Old and the New Testaments is not confined to the predictions in the prophetic writings of the evangelical history. With our much more strictly historical

method of interpretation, we must refuse to recognise predictions, as the writers of the New Testament did, when there is merely a verbal coincidence, but where the context forbids such reference. But we can see even a wider, closer, more inward connection, as the progressive revelation of God's nature, man's duty, and God's purpose to save man, has its consummation only in Christ Jesus, who perfectly reveals the Divine reality, perfectly realises the human ideal, and perfectly redeems man from sin, and restores him unto God. As the New Testament is the record and interpretation of this revelation and redemption in Jesus Christ, it is continuous historically with the prophecy and progress testified by the Old Testament. This fact is of supreme value and significance for any interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; we have not in text or passage which we may be studying a single stone detached and separate, but it is built into a holy temple of the Lord, filling its place and fulfilling its aim in the sacred structure.

2. While this consideration applies to all parts of the Bible, yet there are texts or passages that have a unique significance in the history of revelation, and we do not do justice to them unless we recognise their special value. Elijah's challenge to the people of Israel to

choose between Jehovah and Baal (1 Kings xviii. 21) marks a distinct turning-point in the development of Hebrew religion ; monolatry as the prelude to monotheism is here affirmed. Amos's declaration of the moral character of Jehovah's election of Israel (chap. iii. 2) distinguishes clearly the prophetic from the popular standpoint. Hosea's change of Jehovah's title from *Baali* to *Ishi* is not only an epitome of the past worship and of the future religion of the nation, but is a new creed, the human response to a new revelation of God as saving love (chap. ii. 16.) Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant (chap. vi. 13) proclaims the separation of the religious from the political community. Micah's definition of the Divine requirements (chap. vi. 8) not only contrasts prophetic and popular conceptions, but also distinguishes for all times and lands ethical from ritual religion. Jeremiah's promise of the new covenant (chap. xxxi. 31-34) is a declaration of the insufficiency of any legal, ceremonial, external reformation, and the need of an ethical, spiritual, internal renewal. Ezekiel's insistence on God's individual dealing with men (chap. xxxiii. 18, 19) asserts a truth which had hitherto been generally ignored—each man's personal liberty and responsibility. The Psalmist's account of the sacrifice that is

well-pleasing unto God (chap. li. 17) is a witness to a great advance from a ritual to a moral religion. The picture of the suffering Servant of Jehovah (Isa. liii.) marks the culmination in the Old Testament revelation of the doctrines of suffering, sacrifice, duty, salvation, and most fully and clearly anticipates the teaching of the New Testament.

3. As the final and perfect revelation is given in Christ all His teaching shows progress; all His utterances are unique in meaning and worth. Are there not some, however, in which what is the most distinctive in His message and mission finds most pregnant expression, as His account of His relation to God's previous revelation (Matt. v. 17), His claim to exclusive knowledge of God as Father (chap. xi. 27), His assertion of His right to forgive sins (chap. ix. 6), His anticipation not only of the fact but of the worth of His death (chap. xx. 28), His expectation of His return in power (chap. xxvi. 64)? These are but a few sayings culled from one of the Gospels, yet how inexhaustible the meaning and worth of each of them in relation to the history of revelation. His demand, addressed to Nicodemus, of the new birth (John iii. 5), and His declaration to the woman of Samaria regarding the spiritual worship of God (chap. iv. 23), express the very core of the Christian religion.

Paul's quotation from Habakkuk (Rom. i. 17) only apparently indicates the permanence of the Old Revelation, but really asserts the progress of the New. Although Christ's teaching about faith warranted Paul's doctrine, yet he was the first definitely to formulate the great evangelical principle of justification by faith. When he asserted the impotence of the law and the sufficiency of the Spirit (chap. viii. 2), he secured Christian liberty from Jewish bondage. When he described the Christian as crucified and risen with Christ (chap. vi. 4), he stated figuratively the fundamental principle of all Christian ethics. More illustrations need not be given. These will suffice to establish the conclusion that in studying any text or passage we should always have in view this widest context, and be always asking ourselves, Is the truth here stated a step in advance in the progress of the Divine revelation?

4. In this connection something may be said about the use of references in the study of the Bible. The Revised Version has now been issued with references also carefully revised on much sounder principles than those which were formerly applied. "The references are arranged under the following heads: (1) quotations, or exact verbal parallels; (2) passages

referred to for similarity of idea or expression ; (3) passages referred to by way of explanation or illustration ; (4) historical and geographical references, names of persons, places, &c., which recur ; (5) passages referred to as illustrating differences of rendering between the Authorised and Revised Versions."

As regards quotations or exact verbal parallels, a study of these may teach us a great deal about the methods of the writers of the New Testament in their use of the Old ; and while we may not always be able to approve these methods as correct, yet we shall undoubtedly be convinced of the continuity of the Divine revelation in the two covenants. Christ's quotation from Hosea (chap. vi. 6, in Matt. ix. 13) shows the harmony of His and the prophetic spirit. Paul's quotation of Habakkuk, already referred to, when the original context is studied, indicates contrast rather than continuity. The quotation in Matthew (chap. ii. 15) from Hosea (chap. xi. 1) in reference to the flight into Egypt is an instance of the discovery of a prediction fulfilled in Christ, when the original context gives an entirely different reference. Christ's words of desolation on the Cross (Matt. xxvii. 46, from Psa. xxii. 1) reveal the

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intimate connection between the experience of the Saviour and all servants of God, tried for righteousness' sake. What must always be remembered, however, is that the same words do not necessarily mean the same, but may be modified in meaning by their new context.

5. Similar considerations apply to the second class of passages. Even where there is similarity of idea and expression, we should carefully scrutinise the passage referred to in its original context to enrich our minds by a discovery of the differences as well as a recognition of the resemblances in thought and language of different parts of the Holy Scriptures. The third class of references, by way of explanation or illustration, is of very great importance, as by means of these references we may in some measure be able to do what it has been insisted is so necessary to be done, that we should always keep before us the widest context possible. The fourth class—historical and geographical references—may be made very helpful. We want to interpret an utterance or an action of some person ; it will make our exposition much more intelligible if we do not confine our attention to the immediate context, but by means of these references reconstruct the personal history as

far as possible, and so get the proximate context—the character and experience of the speaker or the doer. So the account of an incident may be made much more suggestive if the associations and memories of the place are recalled, as the geographical references may aid us in doing. Dr. George Adam Smith's "Historical Geography of the Holy Land" illustrates the interest of such geographical and historical knowledge of places. The last class of references, illustrating differences of rendering between the Authorised and Revised Versions, is of importance to us in seeking to get the most exact translation we can reach. Of all these references diligent use must be made in order that the Bible may as far as possible become self-interpreting. Other aids we must not neglect, but this method has a first claim.

# X

## BOOKS RECOMMENDED

1. "The Bible: its Origin and Nature," by Marcus Dods, D.D.  
(T. & T. Clark.) 4s.
2. "How to Read the Bible," by Walter F. Adeney, D.D.  
(James Clarke & Co.) 1s.
3. "The Construction of the Bible," by W. F. Adeney, D.D.  
(Sunday School Union.) 1s.
4. "A Primer of the Bible," by W. H. Bennett, D.D.  
(Methuen & Co.) 2s. 6d.
5. "A Guide to Biblical Study," by A. S. Peake, M.A.  
(Hodder & Stoughton.) 5s.
6. "Cambridge Companion to the Bible." 1s.
7. "Oxford Helps to the Study of the Bible." 1s.
8. "Textual Criticism of the New Testament," by B. B.  
Warfield, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 2s. 6d.
9. "The Printed English Bible," by Richard Lovett, M.A.  
(Religious Tract Society.) 1s.
10. "An Introduction to the Old Testament," by C. H. H.  
Wright, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 2s. 6d.
11. "The Old Testament and its Contents," by Professor  
Robertson, D.D. (A. & C. Black.) 6d.
12. "An Introduction to the New Testament," by Marcus  
Dods, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 2s. 6d.
13. "The New Testament and its Writers," by J. A. McClymont,  
D.D. (A. & C. Black.) 6d.

14. "The Theology of the Old Testament," by W. H. Bennett, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 2s. 6d.
15. "The Theology of the New Testament," by W. F. Adeney, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 2s. 6d.
16. "Our Lord's Teaching," by J. Robertson, D.D. (A. & C. Black.) 6d.
17. "Life of Christ," by James Stalker, D.D. (T. & T. Clark.) 1s. 6d.
18. "Life of St. Paul," by James Stalker, D.D. (T. & T. Clark.) 1s. 6d.
19. "The Times of Christ," by L. A. Muirhead, B.D. (T. & T. Clark.) 1s. 6d.
20. "Early Church History," by J. Vernon Bartlet, D.D. (Religious Tract Society.) 1s.
21. "The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges."
22. "The Century Bible." (Jack.) 2s. 6d. each volume.



**SECOND SECTION**

**HOW TO STATE THE GOSPEL**



# I

## EVANGELICAL PREACHING

WE have hitherto been seeking an answer to the question, How to study the Bible? We must now ask ourselves, What is the aim of our study? Great as is the importance and the value of the Holy Scriptures as literature, we do not study only that we may apprehend their meaning and appreciate their worth as such; we have an immediate, dominant, practical purpose; we want to discover the message from God that they convey. But this message is manifold, ethical, and spiritual. God reveals His nature and man's, the duty man is called to discharge, and the destiny God appoints for man. The core of the message, however, is redemptive; the salvation from sin for man that the sacrifice of God in Christ secures. It is the Gospel in the Bible that we seek.

2. It has been customary to distinguish

between expository and topical preaching ; the difference may be thus stated : in expository preaching the aim is the interpretation of the text, and in topical the explanation of the subject. There is an *expository preaching*, in which the scholarly interest is allowed to predominate, and the preacher seeks only to inform and instruct regarding the Bible without any practical purpose or evangelical appeal. It is altogether doubtful whether the ambassador of Christ has any right to be content with doing this only. There is a *topical preaching*, in which subjects of ephemeral interest, remote from the essential verities of the Gospel, are presented in a popular form to attract, not to say amuse, the crowd ; but that is still less work fit and worthy for the Christian witness. Preaching ought to be both expository and topical ; it ought to be both instruction in the Bible and declaration of the Gospel, and the former with a view to the latter. The interpretation of a passage of Scripture ought to have as its aim to bring men and women face to face with the great realities of sin and guilt, salvation and glory. The explanation of any of the subjects as presented in the Christian Gospel should be based on a careful study of the Scriptures. The text should not be altogether a fetter to, still less ought it to be only an ornament on the sermon ;

all Christian preaching should make *patent* the *latent* Gospel of the Bible. While the Christian minister who is preaching Sunday after Sunday to the same congregation can give freshness and fullness to his preaching only by giving a large place to exposition of the Bible along with his declaration of the Gospel, the lay preacher, without neglecting the study of the Bible, may more exclusively give himself to topical rather than expository preaching.

3. A caution must, however, be given here. In the choice and the use of his text, the lay preacher must be guided and controlled by the correct, approved rules of exposition. If a subject is to be dealt with, a text must be selected which legitimately presents, or suggests, the subject. The appeal to decision for Christ must not be based on the invitation of Rebekah to accompany Abraham's servant (Gen. xxiv. 58). There are so many passages in which the Gospel is, if not explicitly, yet implicitly present, that there is no need of doing violence to the plain sense of a text in order to impose on it a meaning it never had, or was intended to have. On the other hand, however, we must not be pedantic in insisting that in a sermon we must never go beyond the immediate meaning of a text. A text may present only one aspect of a topic we desire to deal with, but that does

not bind us to deal with that aspect only ; we may, starting from that aspect, go on to deal with the other aspects, making clear, however, when our exposition of the text ends and our explanation of the subject begins. So the language of Scripture is endlessly suggestive ; when we bring our knowledge of Christian truth and life to the study of a text, avenues of thought will open before us on this side and on that, our prospect will often be far wider than was possible to the original writer or speaker. The words of Jesus are a great deep, which we feel we cannot fathom ; just because His language was poetical, figurative, is it so suggestive. The Parable of the Prodigal Son legitimately suggests to us a great deal about the nature of God, man, sin, judgment, penitence, pardon, salvation, that it is not the immediate purpose of the parable to teach. Isa. liii. means a great deal more to us now than it could to the writer. We cannot be confined to the strict historical meaning, but whatever suggestions come to us should be developments of that ; and we should always be careful to distinguish what the text means and what it further suggests to us.

4. I am taking for granted that what the lay preacher does want to do is to declare the Gospel. The functions of the regular ministry

must be necessarily more varied. The Sunday School, Band of Hope, Bible Class, may demand of the lay preacher other subjects and other methods, but with these we have no present concern. It is to reach the lapsed, arouse the indifferent, bring to decision the unconverted, in the cottage, mission, or open-air meeting that lay preaching will, as a rule, be most in demand and of greatest service. To effect this purpose the preaching must be *evangelical*; a Saviour must be presented to the sinful. This limitation is no degradation, but an exaltation of the lay preacher's work, for the regular ministry cannot desire any nobler function. Jesus came to call sinners; He preached the Gospel to the poor. To be evangelical, however, it is not necessary to be traditional in thought and conventional in method. Lay preaching to be effective must be informed and intelligent. The culture of the poor must not be despised, and it must not be supposed that a theology which is too much behind the age in the church is good enough for the evangelistic service. Among the working classes there are not a few who read, and who know something about the change in Christian belief that modern thought has made; and the lay preacher should not make the most ignorant and least intelligent the standard, but the best-informed and most keen-witted. It

were an insult and an injury to the Gospel to suggest that it cannot be so presented as to make an effective appeal to the man who knows and thinks. "Evangelical" is an epithet that has sometimes been claimed by a reactionary theology; that it may belong to a progressive, it will be the purpose of this series of lectures to show.

5. The preacher is primarily a witness. Because he believes, therefore he speaks. He desires others to share the same salvation as he rejoices in. Evangelical preaching must be *experimental*. There is a power in preaching which can be given only by personal experience. The truth a man has lived grips him as the truth he has only believed on the testimony of others cannot. But this experimental aspect of preaching has also its dangers. There may be an obtrusion of self, which is as hurtful to the preacher as it is offensive to his hearers. The man who is too frequently telling about his conversion runs the serious danger of becoming so familiar with the narrative as to blunt his own spiritual sensibility. It is perilous, even for the preacher, to make self prominent. Vanity, arrogance, and unreality are not infrequently the result. But even if this danger is avoided, the preacher who confines his regard too exclusively to his own experience is too

prone to be very narrow in his sympathy, with no appreciation of experiences unlike his own. He is likely to set up his own experience as normal, and to expect all others to conform to it. If a man has had what is called a sudden conversion, he is apt to doubt and distrust the reality of Christian life, the birth of which is unmarked and the growth of which is slow. On the other hand, he who has had no spiritual crisis in his history is inclined to regard the sudden conversion of another as unreal. What will correct the defects that individual limitation of experience involve is the cultivation of a generous religious sympathy, the study of varied religious biography. A careful examination of the types of experience presented in a John, a Peter, a Paul, a Thomas, a James in the New Testament will widen the spiritual sentiments and quicken the spiritual discernment, so that experience will become not a fetter, but a force, in preaching.

6. What the world in which we live demands is that the Gospel shall bring forth fruit; and that demand does not contradict, but is in accord with the essential purpose of the Gospel. Its aim is to make men great in the widest sense of that term. This consideration must ever be present to us in preaching the Gospel. Some preachers appeal to non-moral motives,

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as fear of hell or hope of heaven ; they present the sacrifice of Christ in a non-moral character, as a mere device of Divine law to transfer the penalty of sinful man to the sinless Son of God ; they commend the salvation of man with a non-moral value as escape from misery and assurance of happiness ; and consequently belief in such a Gospel has non-moral effects. This is to caricature the Gospel, and so to make it of none effect. We must always remember that in the Cross of Christ the world's worst moral problem has found God's best moral solution ; and thus our preaching must be not only *evangelical* and *experimental*, but *ethical* also.

## II

### THE NEED OF THE GOSPEL

IN preaching the Gospel it is necessary to understand clearly to whom the Gospel is addressed. The Gospel is not a superfluity, but a necessity, for mankind. What is there, then, in man's condition that demands the Gospel? It is not the sorrow and suffering, the grief and failure in human life, that primarily concern the Gospel; although he who believes the Gospel will have the most tender sympathy for human pain and need, and will make the most serious endeavour to secure relief for the stricken hearts. The Gospel is concerned with the cause of many of these evils, even the greatest evil of all—sin. Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners (Mark ii. 17); and there must be a sense of sin before there can be the beginnings of faith in Him, for first of all and most of all He desires not to be

heard as Teacher, or followed as Example, but to be trusted as Saviour from sin.

2. That there is sin in the world needs not to be proved by the Gospel ; conscience, experience, history prove its existence beyond doubt or question. It is not in the Bible alone that we find an expression of the consciousness of sin ; in all serious literature the fact is recognised. But what is necessary is to convince men individually of their sinfulness, to arouse in them so intense a consciousness of their own sinfulness, as will constrain them to seek the salvation from sin which is offered in the Gospel. To do this it is imperative to repel the excuses which men are so prone to make for themselves. In some recent literature the effort has been deliberately and determinedly made to extinguish this sense of sinfulness by the assertion that man is not free and not responsible, but is determined absolutely by his heredity and environment. Without entering into an abstract discussion of the problem of liberty as against necessity (*see Section Four, Lecture V., "Is Man Free?"*) appeal may be made to conscience and to experience. Men who sin blame themselves ; remorse is but an illusion if there be no liberty, and all is necessity. With all possible pity for the man who has inherited evil tendencies, or a physical

organisation in which the results of parental self-indulgence are being perpetuated, it is the only kindness we can show him not to encourage his belief that if he is morally ruined it will not be his own fault. There are means of rescue put within his reach in the Gospel, and he will be to blame himself if he does not welcome these for his salvation. While we are bound to do our utmost to remove all social conditions that make virtue hard and vice easy, let us not hesitate to insist that no man is the helpless and hopeless victim of his environment ; he can in some measure withstand by the grace Christ can give him, and if he abjectly submits, he has himself had a share in his own undoing.

3. In dealing with the doctrine of sin it is not at all necessary, and it is altogether undesirable, to speculate about the origin of sin. It is now generally recognised by those who have a right to an opinion on the question that the story of the Fall in Genesis iii. cannot be taken as literal history, whatever may be its symbolic significance. It is not right or wise in preaching to assume that the story commands unquestioning acceptance. It is not necessary to make any reference to it whatever. The teaching of the Old Testament, of Jesus, of the apostles, is in no way based upon this figurative narrative ; and Christian theology has given to the Fall an

importance that the Scriptures do not warrant. That sin is in the world we do know; how it came into the world it is not at all necessary that we should know. That each man is not what he ought to be, that the race has fallen short of the destiny its ideals promise is an undoubted fact, however the beginnings of sin may be explained.

4. It is both necessary and legitimate on fitting occasions to warn against the sins of drunkenness, uncleanness, dishonesty, and to offer the assurance that the grace of Christ can make a man sober, clean, upright; but for the most part the exposure and denunciation of these sins will not touch the consciences of most hearers, as they cannot honestly charge themselves with any of these offences. To lay undue emphasis on these grosser sins in preaching is to give the false impression that respectable, moral people, in the current social acceptation of these terms, do not need the Gospel. What the preacher of the Gospel must aim at is to show the secrecy and the subtlety of sin; he must help men to discover the evil that is in the inward parts. All the commandments left Saul the Pharisee self-satisfied and self-confident, but the command that forbids lusting searched out the foul spot and festering sore in his moral nature (Rom. vii. 7). Jesus taught the inward-

ness of morality. He extended the moral demand from words and deeds to motives, dispositions, desires (Matt. v.). He did not most severely chastise the vices of society, which even the low social standards of the age condemned. He was most urgent in his condemnation of the sins of the Pharisees, respected for their morality (Matt. xxiii.). Worldliness and selfishness, then, seem to be the forms of evil that it is most necessary so to expose, that all who are in bondage under their dominion should be awakened to a desire for release and rescue. To cherish lower aims than those set us by our ideals and aspirations is to sin; to be more concerned about success, prosperity, enjoyment, than the moral duty to ourselves, God, and others, which, when we soberly and seriously reflect, we know has supreme authority over us, is evil; to think and care and strive for self in sparing ourselves pain or seeking pleasure for ourselves, is to lose our higher in saving our lower life. This is the Christian conception of sin.

5. But as "truth embodied in a tale" can enter in where "truth in closest words would fail," to be effective in bringing about the conviction of sin, it is necessary not to talk about abstract ideals of or vague aspirations after truth, love, goodness, but to present for

the admiration and adoration of men the living, loving, mighty Personality, in whom the ideals are realised and the aspirations fulfilled. It is not the law of Sinai, but the Gospel of Calvary, that brings judgment to the world. The sinless perfection, the selfless sacrifice of Jesus Christ convicts the world of unrighteousness and selfishness. If a man is to repent truly and fully, he must not ask himself, Which of the commandments of God's law have I broken? but, How far short have I fallen of the manhood present in Jesus Christ, for which I am destined? How His disregard and defiance of the world rebukes our worldliness; His surrender to the Cross our self-sparing and self-seeking; His zeal for God our lukewarmness! It seems to me one of the more hopeful features of the time that in evangelicalism the person of the Saviour is becoming more prominent than the plan of salvation, because it is the person of the Saviour alone that can awaken the deepest sense of sinfulness and the fullest desire for salvation. In the older evangelicalism men were sent to Sinai before they were called to Calvary; as though the Cross did not most fully disclose the disease for which it most fully provides the remedy. But so to preach Christ that in His light sin will be seen as most hateful and accursed demands in the preacher a keen, moral

sensibility, a clear moral discernment, an intense moral appreciation of the grace and glory of Jesus. The man whom the grosser sins alone distress, to whom the finer graces do not appeal, will not so know and value Christ; hence it is only in the measure that a man is humbled by Christ that he can exalt Christ before other men.

6. As it is of the utmost importance that the Gospel's first effect should be this conviction of sin, this sense of moral unworthiness and weakness, this desire for moral cleansing and strengthening, the greatest possible care should be exercised not to awaken the wrong motives by merely appealing to selfish fears and hopes. That "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life" (Rom. vi. 23) is an essential truth of the Gospel, and in the next lecture the consequences of sin will be dealt with; but meanwhile what must be urged is that the aim of the Gospel is to arouse men to hatred of sin, and not merely fear of its consequences. It is possible that there are natures so enslaved by sin that the hatred of the sin must be consequent on the fear of the punishment; and as the penalty of sin is a reality, it is, when necessary, quite legitimate to arouse the indifferent and subdue the defiant by making plain to them the awful peril in which they

stand, and the appalling ruin they are bringing on themselves. But I am persuaded that the appeal to fear should be far more sparingly used than has commonly been the case in evangelistic effort. The Christian life will make a far better start, and is likely to have a far more prosperous course, if the Gospel reveals to men that their deepest need is to be delivered from sin and to be made good, and if the revelation comes to them in the winsome and yet mighty, lovely, and yet holy appeal of the Christ in His grace and glory to what is truest and best in them, the ideals that sin has not altogether blotted out, the aspirations which sin has not altogether quenched. When the Christian life begins as a moral response to this moral appeal, its essential, progressive character is assured from the very beginning. Justification and sanctification will not be separate phases, or successive stages of the life, as the motive for seeking pardon will be the desire for becoming holy.

## III

### THE PENALTY OF SIN

WHILE it is dangerous and hurtful to make the appeal to fear prominent in preaching the Gospel, yet it is sometimes needful and right to make very plain that the wages of sin is death. If we follow the guidance of the New Testament we shall not lay undue emphasis upon the penalty of sin, but shall very clearly state that there is penalty. At one time the doctrine of eternal punishment was preached so confidently and so extravagantly that a necessary and legitimate reaction followed.

(i.) As the conception of God's Fatherhood received fuller recognition, this theory that the limited and temporal transgressions of ignorant and imperfect men were visited with inexhaustible and unceasing torments became an outrage, not only inconsistent with, but even a blasphemy on, the truth about God.

(ii.) As men recognised the necessary limita-

tions of human knowledge and the experimental basis on which it rests, such confidence regarding the nature and the duration of the punishment of sin appeared unwarranted.

(iii.) As the changed method of the study of the Bible forbade the dogmatic use of isolated texts, showed the figurative character of much of its language in regard to the future life, and revealed not one fixed doctrine, but varied and variable views on the subject of human destiny, the seemingly solid foundation of this doctrine of eternal punishment appeared to be shaken, and even removed. Among those who have been influenced at all by the thought of the age the doctrine of eternal punishment, if not denied, is yet not so confidently believed as to be emphatically preached.

2. The subject is not infrequently avoided altogether, and there is not a little preaching that lacks entirely an adequate recognition of the solemn issues that depend on human conduct and character. It is necessary that the question of human destiny should be faced and answered, that the dangers and the duties of the present should be dealt with in the light of eternal issues as well as momentary results. And it does seem possible, without making any illegitimate use of the Scriptures, without showing any arrogant confidence in the powers

of the human mind to pierce beyond the veil, and, with the guidance of experience and science, to lay down certain clear and broad principles which we can honestly hold and confidently declare. Attention was formerly directed to the remote future, and the sentence to be pronounced, and the penalty to be executed on the impenitent and disobedient; but we follow a safer course by considering the immediate consequences of human acts.

(i.) When we so look at sins, we discover, first of all, that the consequence is the reproach and the rebuke of conscience. The sinner stands self-condemned. He knows that he is not what he ought to be, and even might be, and he is ashamed of himself. This unrest and dissatisfaction is the distinct evidence that in this wrong choice he has acted contrary to his own nature, he has inflicted a wrong upon himself. This feeling may become so intense as to be a haunting and gnawing remorse, which makes life itself a hell. The literature of the world abounds in instances of this self-inflicted penalty of sin.

(ii.) When this moral conscience is accompanied, as it is in all but a few exceptional cases, by the religious consciousness that in sinning the law of God has been broken, the authority of God has been defied, the dis-

pleasure of God has been incurred, remorse becomes a sense of *guilt*. In this sense of guilt we may, it seems to me, distinguish two elements. There is a feeling of estrangement from God; the personal relation of man and God has been disturbed, the communion interrupted, the satisfaction it could give has been changed to discomfort. The sinner seeks to flee from God's presence, because the Divine perfection is now not a delight, but a rebuke to the human imperfection. This estrangement may even become hostility, a desire to cast off all God's restraints, and to ignore, as far as possible, even God's existence. The fool does desire to say, there is no God. But it is also known that God cannot thus be escaped; the restraints He may impose, the penalties He may exact, are dreaded. The sinner cannot regard God as indifferent to his disobedience, but anticipates God's vindication of His authority.

(iii.) The penalty of sin, the reaction of the moral nature that has been outraged, or of the Divine law that has been violated, is not long in showing itself in the moral deterioration of the sinner. On the one hand, the temptations to which he has yielded gain in strength as he yields: the drunkard finds the intoxicating cup always more alluring; on the other hand, he

finds his powers of resistance grow less and less. Acts make habits, and habits form character, and if the acts are sinful, the habits become a fetter on moral freedom, and the character a bondage to immoral temptations. And as the evil obtains further possession of the thoughts, feelings, desires, the good is expelled from mind, heart, will. As sin grows more and more, righteousness grows less and less. Thus moral ruin is the result, inevitable and certain, of moral indulgence. The sentence on sin is executed, surely, if slowly, in a man's moral nature.

(iv.) But, as no man liveth unto himself, the consequences of sin cannot be insulated, but must be continued and extended. Heredity perpetuates, environment diffuses wrong. The sinner transmits an evil inheritance to his children; he exercises an evil influence on his neighbours. Unless he is lost to all sensibility and affection, he cannot, when he reflects, but feel as a burden resting on himself this injury and wrong that he does to others. It is thought undutiful for children to reproach and blame their parents for their inheritance of weakness and woe, yet that may be in the cup of bitterness the sinner drinks. It is regarded as altogether legitimate that society should react on those of its members who do it hurt. There

are the punishments of crime and the penalties of vice, and even when the offence is not regarded as either crime or vice, social displeasure may inflict, in varied forms, discomfort on the sinner.

(v.) Death is a very common fact of human experience, yet it is not the less a solemn mystery. And here "Conscience doth make cowards of us all"; it does anticipate in a future life a continuance, if not an aggravation, of the penalties that are now being endured on account of sin. Not in the Christian religion alone is sin the sting of death. The anticipation in the future life of a judgment more searching and a penalty more severe than this life offers is not at all uncommon. Thus the wages of sin are remorse, guilt, and moral impotence, the sense of perpetuating and diffusing evil by heredity and in the environment, social penalties, and the dread of judgment and punishment even after death.

3. This is the testimony of human experience regarding the penalty of sin, and we may now ask ourselves whether this testimony is trustworthy.

(i.) We need not ask ourselves whether what may be called the *objective* penalties are real, as here no doubt or suspicion of illusion can enter in.

(ii.) But remorse, the sense of guilt, the dread of death may all be regarded as purely subjective, as morbid, as illusory. We may frankly and fully admit that the sinner has by his sin obscured his own moral vision, and that, therefore, he may not see the great moral realities clearly. His condition may not be as hopeless and helpless as it appears to himself ; it is not an angry and a vengeful God with whom he has to deal ; the hereafter may not be as horrible as he pictures it to himself as being. Yet, on the other hand, it is certain that there can be salvation only by severance from sin ; that God as absolute goodness cannot be indifferent to, or neutral in, the conflict between good and evil, and that, consequently, He cannot have the same pleasure in, and show the same favour to, the sinner as the saint ; that there must be moral and spiritual continuity in this life and the next, and that it cannot there go well with him with whom it here goes ill.

4. The Holy Scriptures confirm these principles. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap ; if he sow to the flesh, he will of the flesh reap corruption ; if he sows to the spirit, he will of the spirit reap life eternal" (Gal. vi. 7, 8). There is hereafter a separation of the saved and the lost, the blessed and the

damned (Matt. xxv. 46). Whether punishment will last for ever, whether the wicked will cease to be, and only believers in Christ find eternal life in Him, whether at last all shall be saved, are theories all claiming support in Scripture. It will be wise and right that we should not confidently commit ourselves to any of them, still less preach them, as if there could be no doubt or question about them. What we have to do is to show men that sin leads to death, moral and spiritual, and that by faith alone life can be assured. The peril is so great, and the promise is so good, that our preaching need never lack the passionate urgency of persuasive appeal. Even if we ourselves should have attained any measure of definite conviction regarding one of the competing theories—*eternal punishment, conditional immortality, or universal restoration*—it seems to me most undesirable that we should give it prominence in preaching. We must confine ourselves to such considerations as the common reason can apprehend and the general conscience can approve. What these considerations are has been indicated; to state these clearly, fully, and forcibly is much more important than to advocate our own solution of the sad problem of the penalty of sin.

## IV

### THE NATURE OF SALVATION

WE have seen that men need the Gospel as sinners, because their sin necessarily involves their ruin as natural, moral, and spiritual beings. They need to be saved from remorse, from guilt as estrangement from God and dread of God, from the deterioration of their own moral nature, from the transmission and diffusion of evil to others, from the dread of death, which is due to the sense of ill-desert. All these needs must be met, and all these dangers must be averted in any salvation that shall be sufficient for and satisfying to mankind. We must now ask ourselves in how far the Christian salvation meets these demands, and whether the proclamation of it is in deed and in truth a Gospel for mankind.

2. As God is the supreme moral reality, as the relation to God is man's supreme moral concern, the adequate salvation must make man right

with God. Before there can be "a conscience void of offence" there must be "peace with God" through the pardon of God. Satisfaction with self antecedent to reconciliation with God is the soul's deadliest peril. It is the condition of the Pharisee against whom Jesus directed His most stern rebukes and solemn warnings. What Jesus Christ does is to annul guilt, to remove man's estrangement from God, and man's dread of God. He comes to mankind proclaiming pardon and peace. "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke v. 20). That is His most characteristic utterance. How that forgiveness comes to the world not in the words of His lips only, but in the sacrifice of His life, how it could not otherwise come, we shall afterwards see as we try to get some glimpses of the moral glory of the Cross. But meanwhile let it suffice to note that to sinners, however abandoned or outcast, God's pardon of sin, and consequent peace with God, are offered.

But what do we exactly mean by pardon? It means recovery of fellowship with God. First of all the estrangement of man from God, deepening, as we have already seen, even into enmity towards God, must be removed. God must be revealed as love, and so much as love that distrust and hate will be conquered and expelled from the heart of man, and the desire

for reconciliation with God will be evoked. The love of the Father is effectively and irresistibly revealed in the grace of His Son, especially in the pity and the passion of the Cross. But, further, the dread of God's wrath which results from this estrangement must be replaced by trust. While man's conscience is not dulled or deadened by any assurance that God is indifferent to sin, while, on the contrary, the condemnation of sin is made plain beyond doubt or question in the suffering of the Son of God that He might save, yet in the overmastering sense of God's love, mercy, and grace in Jesus Christ there is conveyed to the sinner the certainty that, if he turns from his sin and surrenders himself to God, he will not be punished as a rebel, but guided and guarded, taught and trained as a son.

3. Consequent on this new relation to God there is a new attitude to all the experiences of life. Its burdens and struggles, its temptations and trials, its losses and bereavements, which were formerly often interpreted as the evidences of God's displeasure, and produced discontent and murmuring, thus widening the estrangement from and deepening the distrust of God, are now recognised as the Father's chastening of the child He loves, the discipline for the development of that new nature which is being increasingly

imparted to His child. Even the physical and social consequences of former wrong-doing, such as disease and the distrust of others, are humbly and submissively accepted as a necessary teaching and training that the soul may become more and more completely detached from world, self, and sin, and may be more unreservedly and devotedly attached to God. "We know that all things work together for good to those that love God" (Rom. viii. 28)—this is a conviction that necessarily results from the assurance "Thy sins are forgiven thee." To believe thoroughly in God's pardon is to be sure in all things of God's providence.

4. The condition of this new relation to God is a turning away from sin to Him, or, in the words of the Gospel of Jesus, repentance and faith (to the explanation of this condition we shall afterwards return). But how can this attitude be maintained? How can the long-cherished and fast-clinging sin be renounced, and how can the righteousness and holiness, hitherto a bondage, become a delight? How can the weak will, enslaved by sin, regain the freedom which must be exercised in the pursuit of the new aims set to the life? Salvation must include a new motive and a new power. It is the holy love of God received in the forgiving grace of Christ that becomes, in Chalmers' famous phrase, "the

expulsive power of a new affection." The worthlessness as well as unworthiness of sin is now recognised ; the worth of truth and goodness, of the life in and for God is now discovered. There is a change of mind regarding the end to be sought in life. And with this change of mind goes a changed direction of the interests and the affections. The world becomes crucified to the man who is crucified with Christ. Henceforth the love of Christ constraineth him (2 Cor. v. 14) no longer to reckon himself as his own, inasmuch as he has been redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). Love for Christ involves life from Christ. Those whom we love inspire, instruct, influence us ; in the measure of our love we share their life. With the new motive also comes the new power. He who can say "the love of Christ constraineth me" can also say "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). It is not the new human love by itself that gives the new human power. It is because men by the dependence of faith abide in the living Christ, in whom it hath pleased God that the fullness of the Godhead should dwell bodily (Col. ii. 9), and of whose fullness all may receive (John i. 16), that He by the communication of His grace abides in them. Henceforth it is not

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they who in their weakness to withstand and overcome sin live, but He liveth in them in the power whereby He Himself, though tempted, was without sin (Heb. iv. 15), and overcame the world, and thus is Himself enabled to make all who trust in Him more than conquerors, and to impart to them "the victory that overcometh the world" (1 John v. 4). In fellowship with God through forgiveness the life of God unto holiness is shared.

5. This new life, as a Divine life, is by its very nature an eternal life. Death has no power over it, and thus there is no fear of death for him whose it is. When the guilt of sin is cancelled, when the power of sin is broken, when the love of God is enjoyed and the life of God is shared, there is no longer any bondage unto the fear of death (Heb. ii. 15). Among the old things that have passed away is the dim uncertainty regarding the future, the dread anticipation of judgment to come. Among the things that have become new is the prospect of the hereafter, for the Gospel that proclaims pardon, peace, and power has also the promise of a blessed and glorious immortality. He who here and now experiences the power of Christ's resurrection, the pledge of the fulfilment of this promise, shares His risen life, has the assurance in the character, purpose, value of the life that he now is living, that it is

a life that cannot know death. That life is a progressive life. The new relation to God, the new attitude to the experiences of life, the new motive of action, and the new power to act are here in their beginning as still a promise and not yet a fulfilment.

6. It is only by a very gradual process that a man appropriates all that the Christian salvation offers to him. Only slowly does he learn to apprehend and appreciate the love of God; through many buffetings and bewilderments in life does he discover that the higher will of God in the events of his life is better than his own wishes; only after many struggles and failures does he submit himself with a single-minded and whole-hearted devotion to the obedience and service of Christ; only through the discipline of many years does he become more and more conformed to the likeness of the Son of God. The development of the new life is here only begun; and, if it is not to be an arrested growth, an unrealised aspiration, an unfulfilled purpose, there must be a future life in which this new life will be continued unto its completion. There is a very real sense in which men are not yet saved, but are being saved, although their salvation always draweth nearer than when they first believed. The Christian life, great and abundant as are its treasures now, is rather an

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inheritance than a possession, and the heir is as yet only a child (Gal. iv. 1).

7. The Christian salvation does not deal partially and imperfectly with the sin of man ; its purpose is realised progressively and gradually, but certainly and unceasingly. Sin is removed, and so its consequences are prevented, in so far as they can be altogether prevented, and even where that cannot be the character of these consequences is so transformed as to cease to be dreaded as penalty, and to be accepted as discipline. There is no other religion that offers to this greatest problem of the history of mankind so adequate a solution, and therefore in declaring this salvation we can all have the absolute confidence that we are preaching the Gospel which mankind needs. It has its negative as well as its positive aspects. The evils from which it delivers must be considered as well as the goods which it bestows, and it depends on the condition of those whom we are addressing on which aspect we shall lay the most stress. If the indifferent are to be aroused and the hostile are to be overcome, then it may be necessary to dwell on the awful peril of the soul from which it saves ; if the anxious are to be relieved and the inquiring are to be satisfied, then ours is the better task of setting forth its glorious promise. The disciple who is instructed

as a scribe of the Kingdom of God will out of his treasures bring forth things new and old (Matt. xiii. 52). He will depict the gloom of life without, and the glory of life with, Christ. This salvation is offered by Divine grace, and it is welcomed by human faith. In considering the proclamation further we must dwell on each of these factors. We shall, first of all, turn to the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit in which the Divine offer comes to us, and we shall then go on to deal with the repentance and conversion, the faith, love, and hope in which the human welcome is given by us. If in this survey of the Christian salvation we do not get over the whole field of Christian theology, yet we shall look at all the themes that must be dealt with if the Christian Gospel is to be presented in its freeness and fullness to men, and we shall have been instructed to fulfil the function of the Evangelist, who describes to men the way that leads from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion, the City of the King and His Redeemed.

# V

## THE LOVE OF THE FATHER

HAVING dealt with the facts of human history, sin, guilt, doom, which show man's *need of the Gospel*, and with the *nature of the salvation*, which is offered to men in the Gospel, we must now consider what God does in offering to man this salvation, and what men must do in welcoming this salvation God offers. The ultimate cause, the final reason for man's salvation is the love of God as Father. It is the distinctive and unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ that He is Father. In the Old Testament we have anticipations of this truth. God is represented as pitying men even as a Father (Psa. ciii. 13), as comforting men even as a Mother (Isa lxvi. 13), as loving, and forgiving, and saving even as a Husband (Hosea ii. 16). The most tender human affections are used as illustrations of the love of God to men. While generally it is the relation of Jehovah to Israel

that is thus represented, yet it would be an injustice to the Old Testament revelation to ignore that in some passages the universality of God's care, bounty, guidance, guardianship, love, mercy, grace, are recognised. While in the other Semitic religions God is conceived generally as Lord, in the Aryan religions the nearness of the Divine to the human is asserted—*Dyaus-pitar, Zeus pater, Jupiter.* Heavenly Father seems a name common to all the branches of the Aryan race; but if we remember that the Aryan family had not the same sense of the separation of man from God on account of sin as the revelation of God's righteousness and holiness developed in the Hebrew nation, from which, as concerning the flesh, Jesus Christ came, the use of such a title by the branches of this family will not lessen in any way the wonder and the glory of this revelation in Christ.

2. What marks out the witness of Christ to the Fatherhood of God is this, that He fully and thoroughly recognises the absolute moral perfection of God on the one hand, and the deep-rooted and far-spreading moral defect and failure of man. It is not by ignoring the moral difference between God in His holiness and man in his sin that He is led to assert this close kinship and dear fellowship. In His own absolute

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separation from sin as obedience to, and reflection of, His Father's holy will He reveals God's absolute moral perfection ; in His call to repentance, and His offer of forgiveness to all men, He assumes man's need of change and pardon. Hence the Fatherhood He reveals is not an easy good-nature, which is indifferent and indulgent towards sin ; but a holy love which not only smites the sinner but itself suffers unto the uttermost that it may save. In His own suffering with and for sinful man Christ, as the Son of God, reveals how much the forgiveness of sin costs God, how much He is grieved and wounded by the error and wrong of men which He pardons. Whoever, then, receives the revelation of God's Fatherhood as given, not only in the words and works, but also in the person and the sacrifice, of Jesus Christ, cannot misunderstand and abuse that love as any sanction of, or excuse for, moral indifference and neutrality, but must ever recognise and confess that love as sin's severest condemnation and sorest penalty, There is, then, in Christ's Gospel no justification whatever of the perilously lax view of God's Fatherhood which often claims His authority, which empties the words sin, guilt, judgment, penalty, of all meaning, and surrenders the absolute moral perfection, without which God's Fatherhood would have no moral significance and value.

3. But having affirmed the thoroughly moral character and purpose of God's Fatherhood, we are next compelled to ask, What is the scope of this relationship? The older view was that the relationship was restricted to those who, by penitence and faith, had received God's grace in Jesus Christ, and that for all others the Fatherhood was a possibility and not a reality. The newer view is that all men are embraced in the love of God as Father. The objection to the former view is that it deprives us of an adequate motive for the Christian salvation. The objection to the latter view is that it obscures the difference there is in their relation to God between those who are in and those who are without Christ. This is a subject which seems to me to demand most careful and accurate definition, as mistake and error on a matter of such pre-eminent importance cannot but be regarded as moral danger and spiritual loss. On the one hand, then, it appears to me that we must conceive God as eternally and infinitely Father of all, if He is to be thought of as without variation and shadow of turning, if the motive of, and reason for, the Christian salvation is to be found in the Divine essence itself. God's desire and purpose, effort and sacrifice, to save all men in Christ, cannot be expressed in any conception that falls

short of permanent and universal Fatherhood. On the other hand, however, it seems to me that what God permanently and universally wills, His relationship to all men as Father, is temporally and individually realised in the experience of each man as by faith he accepts God's grace in Christ. The gifts and blessings of God's Fatherhood are used and enjoyed only by Him who is in Christ. As in the relation of the human parent there is a distinction between the child that grieves and the child that delights his heart, so for God there is a difference between the actual and the possible sonship in response to His Fatherhood.

4. It is this holy love which wills to save all men from sin, that is to be regarded and represented as the source of the Christian salvation. Evangelical theology has often been tainted and marred by an unevangelical conception of God. The grace of Christ as Saviour has sometimes been so interpreted as altogether to obscure the love of the Father, which Christ in His grace knew Himself to be expressing and exercising. Christ has sometimes been represented as shielding and succouring men from an angry and strict judge. By the Cross of Christ a change in the Divine disposition towards men is sometimes supposed to have been brought about. The angry and strict

judge was turned into the loving and forgiving Father. Or, even in the Cross of Christ, there was secured not the actuality of this change, but only the possibility to be realised in each individual experience by penitence and faith. I do not believe that we have a Gospel worth preaching to men if we must represent God as needing to be appeased by sacrifice, to be propitiated by blood. God is eternally and infinitely love; as love He universally and permanently seeks to save from sin by forgiveness and renewal of man; in His essential and necessary will to save He approaches and appeals to mankind in His own sacrifice in the death of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son; that sacrifice is the channel in which the Divine current of love, mercy, grace freely flows, and not the cause of His being loving, merciful, gracious; God's Fatherhood is not the result, but the cause of the Cross of Christ. Why God does not save without sacrifice, why, to use words that have often been horribly abused, "without shedding of blood there is no remission," is a question we must try to answer in the next lecture, but meanwhile let it be affirmed that the love of the Father is the motive of, and reason for, the Christian salvation.

5. While the Fatherhood of God is thus antecedent to the Christian salvation, it is also

immanent in it. He who is saved is saved unto sonship, into filial confidence toward, communion with, and submission to God as Father. Christ revealed God's Fatherhood to men, not only by His teaching about God, but still more by the life He lived in, with, for God. Hence any representations of God which make it difficult, if not impossible, for men, by their own experience as children of God to realise the truth and the worth of Christ's revelation, impoverish and narrow the Christian salvation. The prodigal returns to the Father's house as a son, and not as a hired servant; and yet, owing to defective teaching on this subject of God's Fatherhood, how many saints of God in the days past cherished a servile distrust of God, and offered a servile obedience to God, and did not rejoice in the Father's welcome home? It is due to this same misconception of what God is that for many Christians Christ, who is the true and living way to the Father, who knows the Father that He may make Him known, takes the place of God the Father. As the misconception of Christ in the Middle Ages led to the substitution of the human mother for the Divine Son, so the misconception of God still leads not a few Christians to linger in the human tenderness, gentleness, kindness of Jesus, instead of through Him abiding in the love

mercy, and grace of God. Christ is the Revealer, the Mediator, the Intercessor, and without His revelation, mediation, intercession we cannot possess God as Father, and yet the Christian salvation is not fully ours until in experience we can trace it to its ultimate source, and can through, in, and with Christ abide as children in His Father and our Father.

## VI

### THE GRACE OF CHRIST

THE love of God is revealed in the grace of Christ; in His Person and Work the holy Fatherhood of God manifests its nature and communicates its gifts. There is no word that so truly and fully expresses the unique character of the life of Jesus as this term grace. To define this term we must not go to its etymology or to its common usage, as in its application to Christ it gains a new content, a larger extension, a deeper meaning, a higher worth. The Gospels are its first commentary, and its exposition is being continued in the history of the Christian Church. The love which is the gratitude of the benefited to the benefactor or the reverence of the inferior to the superior is not grace, neither is the intimacy of equals; love is grace only when it is compassionate, generous, condescending, when it is shown to the lowly by the

lofty, the mean by the great, the good by the bad. It is love's condescension, ministry, sympathy, sacrifice, succour, and triumph. If in the relation of man to man, where there is difference of mental capacity, moral character, spiritual experience, there can be grace in the kindness and helpfulness of the wiser towards the foolish, of the better towards the bad, of the more godly towards the godless ; still more must the love of God in relation to man be grace. In the Divine *grace* it is Divine knowledge that is imparted to human ignorance ; it is Divine affection that is offered to human indifference ; it is Divine righteousness that seeks to subdue human iniquity ; it is Divine sacrifice by which is effected human salvation. This may be taken as a general definition of what grace as the expression and exercise of Divine love in relation to human unworthiness and weakness is, but the definition must be made more precise and adequate by illustration from the person and work of Christ.

2. In the grace of Christ, then, we may say first of all we can see the Divine love stooping. He who was in the form of God and thought it not a prize to be snatched to be on an equality with God emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Him-

self and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Phil. ii. 5-8). He who was rich for our sakes became poor (2 Cor. viii. 9). The Word that was with God and through whom all things were made became flesh (John i. 14). In such language do the Christian apostles describe the descent of the Son of God to humanity, the humiliation of the Word of God in the days of His flesh. The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation are too difficult to be chosen as the subjects of lay preaching, and, as I am concerned now only to indicate to you what you may and ought to preach, I do not deal with them; but this may be insisted on in preaching the Gospel, that the manifestation and operation of God under human conditions and limitations was *grace* (see Section Four, Lectures II. and IV.).

3. But, looking more closely at the manner of the life of the Incarnate Son of God, we may next notice that His grace was love *serving*. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. xx. 28). That was His own testimony concerning Himself; so, too, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27). In the washing of the disciples' feet there is given a sign of the spirit and the purpose of His life. In His teaching Divine

wisdom set itself to remove human ignorance; in the healing Divine compassion and sympathy used Divine power to relieve human pain and grief; in His intercourse with, and influence over, the sinful and outcast, Divine holiness and Divine goodness were active in cleansing the stain and breaking the bondage of sin. If we remember how constant were the demands made on Him for the manifold help He gave to men, and how instant was His response to the human appeal, His life of service may be regarded as a token and proof of grace.

4. But in serving men He could not but *suffer* with men. In the first place He could be made perfect for His ministry only by suffering. He who could succour the tempted must Himself be in all points tempted. He who entered into conflict with the evil in the world that He might rescue some of its victims necessarily exposed Himself to "the contradiction of sinners." He who in His care for the outcast and the fallen sought them and drew them to Himself must needs excite the prejudice and suspicion—nay, even the hostility—of the morally respectable and the conventionally pious. He who was constantly coming into contact with need, pain, grief, and had a heart of tenderness, gentleness, and kindness,

could not but suffer keenly with and for others. His pity, the motive of His comfort and help, was pain to Him. The conditions of His ministry made Him “a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. liii. 3); and that in His love He so suffered shows His grace.

5. Yet this does not fathom the depths of His descent. The world into which He came was a world on which rested the curse of sin. The contact with error, and hate, and wickedness in manifold forms, which was constantly forced upon Him in His ministry, was pain unspeakable to Him. When the sober man sees the drunkard, when the pure woman looks on her fallen sister, when the upright man in business meets with falsehood and fraud, there is suffering even, although in all men sin has in some degree blunted moral sensibility; how much more must Christ have suffered, since His conscience was not dulled or deadened by any moral error or wrong, since He saw the horror and the loathsomeness of sin with the pure eyes of holiness? But, further, in Christ alone was love in its fullest energy of compassion and sympathy for sinful men; His love was so intense as to be an identification of Himself with the human race. The sin of mankind was not for Him something with which He had no concern.

Himself sinless, because He was perfect love, He felt the shame and stain, sorrow and doom of sin as His very own. He was made *sin* (2 Cor. v. 21) not by committing any sin, but by so becoming one in His love with the sinful race that its curse fell on Him, laying on Him its heaviest burden, casting over Him its dreariest shadow (Gal. iii. 13). The curse of sin is concentrated in death. Whatever death as a physical phenomenon may be, as a personal experience, anticipated by sinful men, it is a mystery and a terror, and the agony in anticipation of death in Gethsemane and the desolation in the experience of death on Calvary prove that Jesus, by love identifying Himself with the sinful race, realised fully its deepest horror in the sense of God's distance from Him (Matt. xxvii. 46). He gave His life as a ransom for many by suffering the very worst evil that it was possible for Him to experience; His was the absolutely sacrificial love—perfect grace.

6. But we may ask, Why did His love descend so far; what necessity for this sacrifice? It is the unanimous apostolic testimony, warranted by the teaching of Christ Himself and confirmed in every age by Christian experience, that He so suffered for our sins that He might save us from our sins. The *sacrificial* was a *saving*

love. During His earthly ministry He claimed the authority to forgive sins, and to the penitent He gave assurance of salvation. Yet He pressed forward to His death as the necessary completion of His work for men; He was straitened until His baptism was accomplished (Luke xii. 50); in the solemn parting hour with His disciples He connected His blood with the new covenant of forgiveness (Matt. xxvi. 28). The apostolic Church so understood His sacrifice as the necessary condition of the salvation to be offered to all men. Not only forgiveness of sins, but all the blessings that go with the recovery of fellowship with God are linked with His Cross.

7. Many attempts have been made by Christian theology to explain this connection between the salvation of men and the sacrifice of Christ; and each theory of the Atonement which in turn has been accepted has been adapted to the intellectual condition of the age, and has been of some value in making intelligible and credible the mystery; but it cannot be claimed that in any doctrine the truth about the Cross has been so stated as to satisfy all minds. But on the one hand the necessity of the death seems to be proved beyond doubt or question by the filial obedience of Christ to the Father's will in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 42); and the

reality of the redemption in His blood is made certain by abounding Christian experience; and there seems to me to be two considerations that in preaching we should lay stress on. First of all, it seems to be a universal condition of human good that it is secured by sacrifice. The mother suffers for her child, the patriot for his country, the reformer for his cause; truth and righteousness on earth are advanced by martyrdom. Antagonism is overcome and allegiance is secured by the endurance of pain and wrong; God's love to win man must needs suffer with and for man. The Cross so exhibits the love of God as to overcome man's hate and unbelief and gain his trust and surrender. Secondly, there is a moral order in the world that links sin and suffering; and that moral order is not merely a disciplinary measure adopted to restrain the wickedness of man; it is a necessary expression of the holy will of God, as by its very nature opposed to and condemning sin. The curse on sin is the inevitable reaction of the holiness and goodness of God against sin. In enduring, as we have seen, this curse of sin in His oneness with sinful mankind, Christ submitted Himself to this moral order as an act of filial obedience to the Father; and accordingly the offer of forgiveness comes from God in a Divine act,

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in which judgment is pronounced and sentence executed on sin.

(This subject is more fully discussed in Section Four, Lecture VII., "Did Christ die for our sins ?")

## VII

### THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

THE love of the Father is objectively manifested in the grace of the Son—the Person and Work of Christ, and subjectively experienced in the fellowship of the Spirit—the indwelling and inworking of the Divine presence and the Divine power. Without attempting to deal with the doctrine of the Trinity, we may look at the truths regarding the fellowship of the Spirit, which it is of importance to present to men in preaching the Gospel. First of all the relation of the Spirit to the Godhead is this, that the Spirit is the immanent activity of God in nature and history, in the conscience, reason, and aspirations of men. God is not far off or idle, but He is near, and at work in the world which He has made. In the Old Testament the processes of nature, the gifts and powers of men, the exaltation, purification and illumination of the

prophets are ascribed to the working of the Spirit of God. In the New Testament this conception is maintained; but developed in two respects. Without any denial of the universal activity of God by His Spirit, the Church, more fully than nature or history, becomes the organ for the manifestation and the operation of the Spirit. The unity of the Church is constituted by the Presence and the Power of the Spirit of God, and through the Church's manifold activities the one Spirit works. The revelation of God in Christ Jesus gives a new content to the Spirit's working in men. It is not the nature and purpose of God generally which is revealed, it is no universal ideal of humanity which is realised; but it is God as Father forgiving and renewing man as His child in Christ Jesus as Saviour and Lord that is made the personal possession of every Christian believer.

2. Secondly, then, the relation of the Spirit to Jesus Christ is this: that the revelation and redemption in Christ is by the Spirit's indwelling and inworking, communicated to, and incorporated in, the personal experience and the personal character of each Christian. But this inward process of reconciliation and restoration unto God is conceived by many Christians as due to the continued life of Christ

in them. Although few Christians can assert this experience with the same confidence and certainty as Paul did, yet many can make his words their own. "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20). And this assurance of Christ's presence and power rests on His own claim to all authority in heaven and earth, and His own promise of constant presence (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). Is this continued life of Christ in those who are united unto Him by faith and the fellowship of the Spirit identical? Christ Himself describes the Spirit as another *Paraclete* (John xiv. 16); and John calls the living Christ also *Paraclete* (1 John ii. 1); but in the same discourse to His disciples as contains the promise of the Spirit, Jesus promises that He will Himself come back and make His abode with His disciples (John xiv. 23). Thus Christ abides and the Spirit dwells and works in believers; and as neither the Scriptures warrant, nor Christian experience demands, a precise distinction between the functions of the one or the other as *Paraclete*, it is legitimate for us to use either representation. As regards the *content*, the Spirit's operation is defined

by the continued life of Christ; but as regards the *mode*, the presence of Christ is determined by the inward work of the Spirit. It is the one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, who gives Himself to us to be our life.

3. The fellowship of the Spirit means for us that the revelation of God and the redemption of man in Christ Jesus become ours in an inward exaltation, illumination, and purification. While it is in the Christian life, the life of faith in the grace of God in Christ that the fellowship of the Spirit is experienced, yet, in order that this life may even begin, the operation of the Spirit is necessary. There is an enlightening of the reason, a quickening of the conscience, a stirring of the emotions, and consequently a subduing of the will, which are the necessary conditions of faith, and this is the work of the Spirit. This operation of the Spirit usually accompanies the proclamation of the Gospel. The varying experiences of life may be the occasions of such strivings of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man, but, as a rule, these experiences would be meaningless without some knowledge of the Gospel. Accordingly it is when Christ is lifted up as Saviour and Lord that the Spirit works conviction and conversion. This Divine activity does not supersede but stimulates the action of the

reason, and the conscience, the affections, and the desires of men ; it is not a Divine omnipotence which reduces the human personality to impotence. It is the vitalising and invigorating of the whole man. Neither does this Divine activity supersede, but utilises, the human agency of persuasive and constraining human speech. When the truth and grace of Christ are presented for acceptance, and when the mind and heart and will of men are exercised to understand and believe, the Spirit is and works. Without His presence and power the preaching would be vain, and the search after and struggle for good fruitless ; but without venturing to restrict the Spirit's working, we may say also that usually He works through the Gospel preached to and believed by man.

4. The contrast between the life in sin and the life in Christ is so marked, and the change from the old to the new life is so great, that the beginning of the Christian life has often been described as a new birth, and this regeneration of man is regarded as the work of the Spirit (John iii. 38). While we must not minimise the difference in thought, feeling, and will between the man who is delivered from the bondage of sin and is entering into the liberty of the child of God, the transformation of his relation to God from antagonism, sus-

picion, distrust, to confidence, affection, submission, and the consequent alteration in all his other relationships, yet we must not ignore the continuity of the personality through the change; it is the same mind which passes out of darkness into God's marvellous light; it is the same heart that out of distress is succoured into the peace of God which passes all understanding; it is the same will that, having been captive to sin, finds emancipation in the service of Christ. The new life is a purification and illumination and invigoration of one and the same person as experienced the old. There is a continuous psychological process; and the sudden and surprising transitions of thought, feeling, desire, do not destroy the identity of the man. It is necessary to insist on this in opposition to misrepresentations which carry the metaphor of the new birth far further than the facts of experience warrant, and represent *regeneration* as an absolute transformation by the omnipotent Divine power, exclusive of the continuous development of the human personality. The change is not always sudden and surprising; it often comes without observation, in a gradual process of spiritual enlightening and quickening. The Spirit works in the one as in the other mode.

5 This new life is not complete at its

beginning, growth as well as birth belong to it; and the same Divine power as brings about the birth carries on the growth. The truth of God needs to be ever more clearly apprehended, and the grace of God needs to be ever more fully appropriated, and the law of God needs to be ever more thoroughly accepted. The image of the Heavenly Father in likeness to the Firstborn of the Family of God is reproduced in the mind, heart, and will of man only very slowly by the indwelling and inworking of the Spirit. In this gradual process man is not, and cannot be, owing to its very nature as personal, moral, spiritual, a merely passive recipient while the Spirit is the only active agent; but man must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, just because it is God that worketh in him by His Spirit His own good pleasure (Phil. ii. 12, 13).

6. Lastly, we must carefully avoid a common error regarding the Spirit's presence and power. It is commonly assumed that in a religious revival the Spirit is more manifest and more active than in the quieter and less marked changes wrought in individual lives. It is the human receptivity that varies and not the Divine activity. Emotions in religion ebb and flow; when the tide of emotion rises to the full it spreads further. These two character-

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istics of religious revivals, the *strength* and the *spread* of the movement of religious interest and effort, are closely connected. Both are capable of a psychological explanation without assuming that either the character or the intensity of the Spirit's seeking for, and striving with, men varies; in the ordinary individual experiences, as in the extraordinary mass movements, it is the one Spirit of God universally present and constantly active in communicating the love of the Father in the grace of Christ.

## VIII

### REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION

THE Christian salvation is from the love of the Father by the grace of the Son through the fellowship of the Spirit ; as the Divine work and gift it is final, complete, perfect ; man cannot supplement or improve it ; it is a finished work and a free gift. But man is not altogether passive while God alone is active ; for man's receptivity involves necessarily activity, as the truth of this salvation has to be apprehended, its worth to be appreciated, and its good to be appropriated ; and mind, heart, will, must be fully, thoroughly exercised to make his own what God has done and is offering. Nor could this be otherwise, for it is man's whole personality which is to be saved from error, hate, and sin unto truth, love, goodness ; and it is no machine to be moved by an external power, but as rational, moral, spiritual, must be moved from within by its own convictions, affections,

purposes, receptive of and responsive to the Divine approach and appeal. However impotent man's will may be to conquer sin and secure righteousness by itself, yet it has potency enough to resist and reject, or to obey and accept the freedom which the grace of God offers. However incapable the mind of man may be to detect all error and to discover all truth for itself, yet it has discernment enough to recognise the truth of the Gospel of God's grace. However hardened the heart of man may be by hate and anger, yet it is not so hard as not to feel the soothing and healing touch of the love of God. Therefore, in order that the Christian salvation may be possessed by any man, he must himself choose and claim it, and as he can, so also he ought. Hence the Gospel offer is a call to duty, a summons to repentance and conversion.

2. It is not at all necessary to distinguish these two terms too rigidly, as they describe only different aspects of the one change by which the Christian life is begun; they do this from the human as the term regeneration from the Divine side; for as has already been indicated, the Divine Spirit's action does not suppress, but stimulates, the human activity. The term repentance has in common usage a narrower meaning than has the Greek term *metanoia* of

which it is the translation in the New Testament. *Metanoia* means change of mind, not as an isolated intellectual process, but as accompanied by the appropriate emotion and the consequent resolution. It does not, as the English term *repentance*, lay emphasis on the feelings, the sorrow experienced on account of past sins, or restrict attention to what has to be renounced and abandoned, apart from what has to be accepted and achieved. When we use the term *repentance*, then, we should seek to put into it this richer content. It means changed beliefs, standards, sentiments. If we are to make a distinction between *repentance* and *conversion*, we may say that the latter lays stress on the choice, decision, and effort of the will as the former does not; in *repentance* are the reasons for, and motives of *conversion* while *conversion* is the result and expression of *repentance*. It is most regrettable that the term "to get converted" is in so common use, for it suggests that conversion is something a man passively experiences instead of actively achieves. The Authorised Version in Matt. xviii. 3, has "except ye be converted," but the Revised Version reads "except ye turn" and it is a pity that the revisers did not venture on "except ye convert," for that would have helped to correct this error. It is important, in preach-

ing, to make plain that conversion does not happen to, but is done by, a man.

3. It seems to me we shall get some light on this subject if we consider briefly one of Paul's dominant conceptions. He represents the change by which a man becomes a Christian as a crucifixion and a resurrection with Christ (Rom. vi. 1-11). The last verse in this passage: "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus," shows that he does not mean by this phrase a mystical experience, a mysterious something that happens to a man, but a moral endeavour, a conscious, voluntary deed done by a man. To be crucified with Christ is to condemn, renounce, and execute sentence on sin in ourselves as Christ representatively and vicariously did on the Cross in relation to the sin of the world. To be risen with Christ is to be altogether separated from sin and absolutely devoted to God, to be renewed in mind, heart, and will, even as Christ at His resurrection entered on a new life in God. For Christ the crucifixion and the resurrection were not merely physical events, but spiritual experiences, nay, even moral achievements. He willed to die the death that atones for sin; He willed to live the life holy unto God. His freely willed filial submission unto the Cross as the condem-

nation of the world's sin was a holy satisfaction unto God, and the resurrection was the Divine acceptance and approval of the satisfaction He had thus offered. In repentance and conversion the sinner so identifies himself with the spirit and the purpose of this sacrifice that the satisfaction of Christ is accepted and approved of God as in his stead and on his behalf; and in the renewal of the fellowship of man and God, the Divine forgiveness on the one hand and the human consecration on the other, there is the moral and spiritual counterpart of Christ's resurrection.

4. Repentance and conversion are the initial act of the Christian life, but they are also a continuous process in it. While in principle, motive, purpose, sin is once for all renounced and rejected, and the will of God as righteous, true, holy, good, is approved and accepted for ever; yet, when the old temptations return, and the old habits renew their hold, there is not infrequently a temporary and partial relapse from the new to the old life. Day by day the world, the flesh, and the self need to be crucified; ambitions, passions, appetites, tempers of sin need to be done to death, in order that truth, righteousness, love may increase and develop in fullness of vigour and freedom of progress. While in standards, sentiments, in-

tentions, there may be the greatest possible contrast between the renewed and the unregenerate man, yet, as regards acts and achievements, there is generally no startling interruption of the continuity. Much disappointment and frequent defeat in the Christian life is due to this, that young converts are not sufficiently instructed regarding the continuous need and the constant duty of carrying on their repentance and conversion in self-denial as regards sin and self-surrender unto God. In so far as a man has altered his allegiance from sin to God, in so far as the direction of his life is changed from the downward path of moral deterioration to the upward path of moral development, he may be said to be saved ; but his salvation is not consummated unless by his own submission to the presence and power of God's Spirit he is really, by dying, dead unto sin, and, by living, alive unto God, and it would be more correct to say that he is "being saved" (Acts ii. 47) and that while God works in him, he works out his salvation.

5. One caution must be given, as it is so very much needed. Just because repentance or conversion is an initial act that begins a continuous process, it is impossible to lay down hard-and-fast rules as to how much of the

inward change shall be at once manifest in this initial act, and how much shall gradually appear in the continuous process. There are men who are arrested on the path of sin, and turn round in one decisive act of submission to the constraining grace of God. They, too, grow in grace, but it is their birth from above that challenges the attention most. Such was Paul. But such instances must not be regarded as imposing a rule, from which only a few exceptions can be allowed. In very many cases, especially where the heredity and environment is genuinely, influentially Christian, there is no consciousness and no memory of the birth from above, while there are the tokens and proofs of growth in grace. It is not at all necessary or desirable that all Christian experiences and characters should conform to one type; where there is aversion and antagonism to sin (not its pains and penalties) there is repentance; where there is devotion and obedience to God there is conversion. The revulsion against sin may be violent or moderate, the submission to God passionate or temperate; for the degree of accompanying emotion depends partly on temperament and partly on the previous experience; but what alone is decisive is the choice of the will—sin, or God. Hence, in preaching, it is of utmost importance to insist that the Christian

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salvation is not apprehended, appreciated, or appropriated until, by repentance, there is a change of mind regarding sin and God, and by conversion there is a turning round from sin to God.

## IX

### FAITH, HOPE, LOVE

THE Christian life began in Divine regeneration, and human repentance or conversion is intended for, and capable of, a gradual progressive development. The dying unto sin is meant to end in a death to sin, and the living unto God is a being alive in God. Sin, world, and self are to be altogether cast out, and the truth, righteousness, and love of God are, by the grace of Christ, to be put on as the beautiful and glorious garment of experience, character, influence. What needs to be insisted on now, as in the times of Paul, is that forgiveness is granted that holiness may be gained, and that without holiness there can be no blessedness. Because grace abounds there must not be continuance in sin; but grace abounds in order to produce an entire renunciation of, a complete separation from, sin. In evangelical preaching such emphasis has often

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been laid on the guilt and doom of sin, the fear of hell and the hope of heaven have been so strongly appealed to, that the Christian salvation has been accepted by not a few primarily as an escape from sin's penalty, and only in a very subordinate relation as the conquest and expulsion of sin itself. That sinners should be warned that the end of their way is death is beyond doubt or question ; but that should never be a prominent feature in evangelical preaching. The Christian salvation is supremely change of motive, disposition, purpose ; it is deliverance from the love and the power of sin ; it is attraction to goodness and unselfishness. Accordingly, the man is not truly and fully saved so long as he continues in sin, but only when sin has been overcome by grace.

2. The Christian life as a gradual progressive development from sin to holiness, in so far as man works with God in the realisation of its ideal, may be described as the exercise of the three Christian graces : faith, hope, love. These are already presupposed in repentance and conversion. The change of mind about sin and God, the turning away from sin to God at the beginning of the Christian life is impossible apart from belief in the Christian Gospel, without the faith which accepts the grace therein offered. It is the graciousness of God thus

revealed that exposes the heinousness of sin; it is the promise of forgiveness that stimulates the effort at amendment. Without the conviction and confidence that God can and will save from sin there would not be the human purpose and effort to abandon sin, and to disown its dominion. Hope, too, there must be for repentance and conversion. There must be a looking forward courageously and confidently to the better life in God that is to take the place of the life in sin. The clearer and brighter the vision of hope the more constraining the inspiration to press on to its attainment. The perfection, glory, and blessedness, which are the consummation of the Christian life, cannot but be a potent motive of its commencement in repentance and conversion. But greater than hope as a constraint is love. The majestic and awful vision of Christ on His Cross, the condemning and yet consoling realisation of the love which endured such self-sacrifice makes hearts contrite and wills submissive. To preach the love of Christ in His Cross is to awaken in those who are not past feeling a yearning and a striving love, which is the mightiest impulse towards sorrow for sin and submission unto God. The Christian life must begin with faith, hope, love, and in their development lies its progress.

3. *Faith* does not belong only to the start of the Christian life; it is needful throughout its whole course. If faith be contrasted with sight as the spiritual sense—the perception of the Divine, eternal realities—then it may be that in the new conditions of the life hereafter it may “vanish into sight.” If faith be belief in mysteries beyond our knowledge, then as the knowledge ceases to be “as in a glass darkly,” and comes to be “face to face,” faith may yield to knowledge. But it seems to me to be more in accord with the Gospel, to give to faith a wider meaning. It is the grace of man’s dependence on God, man’s reception of, and response to Divine communion and communication. As creature man is physically dependent on his Creator; as subject he is morally dependent on his Governor; but as child he is spiritually dependent on his Father. Man gains what God gives. In no relation is man sufficient unto himself; but in every relation his sufficiency is of God. In the lower stages of religion even the bounty of Nature is recognised as the gift of the gods. Conscience in the higher stages speaks as the Voice of God. In the Christian religion, which roots in, grows out of, the Divine revelation and redemption in Christ, all good is recognised as of God’s free grace, undeserved and unearned by man, and

communicated by God in measure of man's faith. Faith is the exercise of man's freedom in accepting God's grace. Were God's grace bestowed without man's faith (were that conceivable) then God would be disregarding man's freedom. To maintain and complete our personality we must freely will to receive the wisdom and power of God unto our salvation; we must freely choose to respond to God's working in us by His Spirit in submission to the direction, impulse, control of His Spirit. Through faith we welcome God's ever increasing grace.

4. Very closely akin to faith is hope; the difference between them may be stated thus: faith receives God's present gifts, hope anticipates God's future blessings; or faith claims God's grace, hope trusts God's promises. These two graces are mutually dependent. Without present experience of God's goodness there could not be future confidence in His faithfulness. As faith gains assurance, hope will grow to certainty. Yet faith itself will be inspired by hope. The present good which faith now claims is seen by the eyes of hope to be not the final and complete blessing God offers; and so faith is impelled to claim more and more that the fulfilment of hope's expectation may not be delayed, but hastened. The function of

hope in the Christian life has often been derided, and it is to be feared that there are not a few Christian men by whom it is almost altogether disregarded. The hope of selfish, worldly ease, comfort, rest, joy in heaven, is certainly not to be commended; but the condemnation should fall not on the exercise of the grace of hope, but on the object toward which it is directed. There is an object of hope altogether congruous with the finest and loftiest human aspirations. To hope for heaven as moral perfection, as the beatitude of a clear vision of, and a close communion with God, as the realisation of all our ideals of truth, beauty, goodness, love, is not only permissible, but even imperative, if we are in this life to bear the burden as strongly, wage the battle as bravely, and tread the path as cheerfully as we ought. Still more is the hope of a final victory of good over evil, of a Kingdom of God spreading and growing among men, of grace much more abounding than sin, an incentive to undertake and to discharge the task of Christian sympathy, service, sacrifice, to which the world's want and woe, sin and shame, call us.

5. Greatest of the three graces is love; because without love faith and hope may be selfish, seeking for, stretching forward to an individual good, forgiveness for self now,

blessedness for self hereafter, and love alone can enlarge their desire and widen their endeavour. It is greatest because it is godlike. As God is not dependent and not progressive, He does not exercise faith and hope; but according to the Christian revelation and in the Christian redemption He is eternally and infinitely love. His perfection, truth, righteousness, holiness, is not exclusive, but communicative. Man receives this communication. He responds in love to the love he receives only as he communicates to others what God has communicated to him. To God he can communicate nothing but his gratitude, expressed in submission and service; but this is the return God desires of him, that as he freely receives, so he, too, shall freely give. The whole-hearted and single-minded, and freely willed surrender of self to God, His Kingdom, His righteousness; this is the love of man to God. But in so surrendering himself man comes to share the life of God, and that is generous, communicative grace. The Christian salvation has been fully received only when a man shows in his character the Divine motive, love. Christ and Paul agree in their teaching, the disciple following the Master, that love is the supreme, and sufficient principle of all Christian morality. He who loves as he has been loved of God will

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do no harm, but all good, to his neighbour. Love will not only direct the actions of beneficence, but will inspire the motives of benevolence. Love will, as God's love, seek the highest good of every man as a brother because a child of God. Who can doubt the sufficiency of love, directed by God's wisdom, and controlled by God's righteousness to bring the Kingdom of God on earth, since the measure of love is the Cross of Jesus Christ?

(This subject is further dealt with in Section Four, Lecture X., "Is the Christian Ideal Social?")

# X

## BOOKS RECOMMENDED

1. "Outlines of Christian Doctrine," by Bishop Moule. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 2s. 6d.
2. "The Faith of a Christian," by a Disciple. (Macmillan.) 6d.
3. "The Truth of Christianity," by J. Iverach, D.D. (T. & T. Clark.) 6d.
4. "The Theological Student," by J. Robinson Gregory. (Kelly.) 2s. 6d.
5. "The Development of Christian Doctrine." I. In the Early Church. II. From the Early Middle Ages to the Reformation, by Prof. J. Shaw Banks. (Kelly.) 2s. 6d. each volume.
6. "Outlines of Christian Theology," by W. N. Clarke, D.D. (T. & T. Clark.) 7s. 6d.
7. "Christian Doctrine," by R. W. Dale, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 6s.
8. "The Doctrines of Grace," by John Watson, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 6s.
9. "Studies in Theology," by James Denney, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 5s.



**THIRD SECTION**

**HOW TO PREACH**



# I

## PERSONALITY IN PREACHING

HAVING dealt in the previous lectures with two of the branches of study necessary for a lay preacher—*How to study the Bible*, and *How to state the Gospel*, we now pass to the third—*How to Preach*—in which we shall be concerned with the preparation and delivery of sermons and addresses; and when we have finished this course of lectures we shall complete the plan of training by some lectures on *How to meet the Age*, dealing with the intellectual doubts and practical difficulties with which the Christian Church is at the present time confronted. We begin to-day with a consideration of the place of personality in preaching.

2. Phillips Brooks, himself one of the greatest preachers, has defined preaching as “the *bringing of truth through personality*.” We have already considered how the truth is to be found in the Bible, and how it is to

be stated in the Gospel; we must now consider how the personality of the preacher is to be expressed and exercised in the art of preaching. As the truth is concerned with a personal Saviour, who meets the religious needs of the whole personality of every man, so through the whole personality of the preacher must the communication be made. It is not merely an intellectual, but also an emotional and a volitional communication which constitutes real preaching. The preacher not only thinks, but also feels and wills. He not only seeks to know the truth of the Gospel, but also to feel its worth with his whole heart, and to exert his will fully that others may claim this good.

The power of preaching depends on passion, the intensity of the emotion which the truth itself inspires in the preacher. There must not only be light, but heat also. A sermon delivered in an unimpassioned way, as though the preacher cared not at all either for his message or for the reception his hearers might give to it, cannot be an effective sermon. Emotion is communicative, nay, intense emotion is contagious; the mood in which the preacher speaks generates the mood in which the congregation hears. But this emotion must not be undirected and uncontrolled excitement, because then there will be *heat* only, without

*light*, and without *work*. Volition must check and guide emotion. The preacher must will to do something, and he must concentrate the energy of his will on that purpose. Preaching is a deed, and not a word only. A resolute purpose and a strenuous energy in the preacher have a commanding influence over his hearers. To feel deeply and will strongly is as necessary to the preacher as to think clearly.

3. Even in regard to the mind, it is the whole mind which is to be exercised. Preachers are prone to pay too exclusive attention to the reason which apprehends truth, and the conscience which appreciates duty, to present only arguments to the one or to bring constraints to bear on the other; but the imagination is in most persons the most direct channel of approach and appeal both to reason and conscience. If a preacher depicts the grace of Christ in the deeds, and especially the sacrifice of Jesus, so that He is by inward vision seen working or suffering, the truth will reach the reason more effectively than if he gives a correct theological exposition. If he describes the needs and sorrows of men with an imaginative sympathy that communicates itself to his hearers, he will impress the duty of bearing the burdens of others much more deeply than if he offered an accurate ethical disquisition.

What men see and hear, and touch has for them more reality than what they think; and imagination is, as it were, intermediate between sense and thought; it is a thought-sense, an inward reproduction of the outward impression. To present his own thoughts to himself in a picture has a twofold effect on the thinker, it both clarifies and vitalises. Ambiguity and obscurity in thinking is corrected by the attempt to represent; and emotion is much more responsive to imagination than to reasoning. The truth, then, must not only be conceived as intelligible, but perceived as real. Our Lord is in this, as in all else, an example to the preacher. When He desired to teach God's individual providence, He said, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. x. 30); when He was showing God's universal beneficence, He said, "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 45); when He was forbidding all vindictiveness, He said, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. v. 39).

4. The memory, too, should be appealed to as well as the imagination. "Every scribe" should bring "forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. xiii. 52). The hearers do not come

as empty vessels merely to be filled. They have their blessed or painful memories; they have a varied experience, through an understanding and respect for which the preacher can come into closer personal contact with them; they have gained a knowledge of life, its peril or promise, its difficulty or duty, its failure or success, its disappointment or aspiration, which the preacher should share, if his preaching is to give the impression of reality. While ministers do not, as a rule, live in the isolation which leaves them ignorant of what really is the life of those to whom they preach; while very few now answer the description of a minister once given, that he was Doctor Invisible all the week and Doctor Incomprehensible on Sunday, yet perhaps lay preachers have some slight advantage over ministers in their own experimental knowledge of the circumstances of their hearers. But the advantage extends only to secondary and superficial differences of position and occupation, the great human experiences, which the preacher is wise in recalling to his hearers, and the appeal to which is most potent, do not belong to any class. If a man has lived intensely, he will know how to awaken memories "too holy for words," and even "too deep for tears." In presenting these recollections,

imagination must generalise, so that the differences in the preacher's and the hearers' experience shall not be obtruded, but even as the preacher speaks out of his own experience, so the hearer will feel that it is his own experience that is being interpreted to him. In this connection it need hardly be added how important is a sympathetic spirit, the ability to realise vividly and intensely the experience of others, so as to recall it to them clearly and fully.

5. But while the imagination and the memory are to be thus used, both must be subordinated to reason and conscience. The end of preaching is that men may believe the truth, and that they may do the duty, which is presented in the Christian Gospel. The intelligence must be so cultivated that not vague opinions, but definite convictions, are communicated from the preacher to the hearer. The imagination must be tested by the intelligence. A beautiful and pathetic picture of the work or the sacrifice of Christ may appeal to the sentiments, and yet may have no moral or spiritual reality; and, therefore, the more imaginative a man is the more vigilant must his intelligence be, lest fancy take the place of fact. So, too, conscience must be very sensitive and acute in the preacher, if his personality is to have full effect on his

hearers. There are preachers who interest, and even impress, and yet theirs is no intensely and effectively moral influence. Their conscience has not the inherent energy to constrain morally other consciences. Men may be touched to pity by them, but are not moved to duty. A clear reason and a keen conscience are indispensable to the preacher, for the Christian Gospel is primarily concerned about the truth of God's grace in Jesus Christ, and about the duty which that grace imposes on man by enabling him to discharge all its claims. The imagination and the memory are necessary and useful servants, but the direction and the control must rest with reason and conscience; the two former may shape the form, but the two latter give the substance of preaching. But both form and substance need to be vitalised by emotion and energised by volition. The whole man thinking, feeling, willing, must be fully and thoroughly expressed and exercised in preaching; and, therefore, the preacher should be willing to submit to all the discipline which will secure the complete development of his personality.

6. It has been taken for granted, but in closing it may be as well to state explicitly, that the personality of the preacher is a Christian personality. He must himself possess

what he seeks to communicate, and his communication must depend on his possession ; for he can freely give only as he freely receives. He must have *faith* in the grace of God, and must ever be exercising that faith in the prayer of dependence, communion, submission. He must have the *love*, in which faith energises, to God supremely, to his neighbour as to himself, the love which seeks and strives for the salvation of others as seriously and earnestly as for his own. He must have the *hope*, set on God, that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, that at last he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together, and that the Word of God in him and through him shall not return to God void, but shall accomplish that unto which God hath sent it.

## II

### GENERAL PREPARATION FOR PREACHING

BEFORE entering on the discussion of the special preparation which is necessary in preaching, and as a transition from the previous subject, "Personality in Preaching," we shall consider the general preparation which is necessary for the preacher. Whatever makes the man wiser and better also makes the preacher fitter and more useful. The culture of the devout life and the development of the moral character are of primary importance. The study of the Scriptures, the communion of the saints, the trials and the duties of life, private prayer and public worship, are all means of a closer intercourse with, and a greater resemblance to, Jesus Christ. Ability and eloquence cannot in the preacher compensate for the lack of moral insight and spiritual vision, which indifference to, or neglect

of, the means of maintaining moral vigour and spiritual vitality involves.

2. As at present, however, we are concerned with the mental preparation, we may, after laying stress on this religious and moral preparation, pass on to consider how the mental faculties may be disciplined for the greatest possible efficiency in preaching, as it has been already insisted on that imagination and memory are to be cultivated as well as conscience and reason. For the culture of the imagination a study of imaginative literature is to be commended. A knowledge of the best poetry has higher uses than to enable the preacher to adorn his plain prose with quotations. Quotations may be used, but they should not be too abundant, and they should be appropriate. There are sermons in which the quotations secure an attention greater than that given to the subject which they are supposed to illustrate and enforce. But, with this caution, a facility and felicity in quotation is assuredly a desirable equipment for the preacher. The audience must be considered, and there are cases in which any display of literary knowledge would repel as an affectation. The highest use of the study of poetry is to quicken our own imagination, so that we can, as it were, see the truth vividly and distinctly.

Not only in dealing with the narratives, but also in making plain the principles of the Holy Scriptures, is this power of inner vision most useful. If we can accustom ourselves to think, not in abstract ideas, but in concrete pictures ; not of sinning, suffering, dying humanity, but of the man, the woman, and even the child in the depths of darkness and desolation ; not of a plan of salvation, to which intellectual assent is to be given, but of a living Saviour, to whom the whole living man cleaves ; we shall approach and appeal to the minds and hearts of our hearers much more effectively. Good poetry, too, purifies and elevates, while it stimulates our emotions.

3. That we may use our own experience and the experience of others to the best purpose in the pulpit, we shall find a knowledge of the human soul most helpful. The science of psychology is of great value to the preacher, and is likely to grow in value, as in recent years the religious life has been receiving very close attention from students of psychology. Take such a subject as conversion, with which every preacher must be concerned ; its types, conditions, manifestations need careful study. The physician knows the anatomy and the physiology of the body ; without that knowledge he would be a quack. Should not the preacher,

who is dealing with souls, know also the laws of their birth, growth, life? In personal dealing there is a great deal of fumbling and bungling. An attempt is often made to treat all cases alike, although the individuality, education, experience, character of each man is different. To understand these differences is not an unimportant aid in preaching. But there are some whom text-books on psychology would repel. They can learn something about humanity from the study of our best novels. That illustrations may be with great advantage drawn from these may be freely granted; but this is not the highest service they can render to us. Surely the "*Scarlet Letter*" helps us to realise more intensely and distinctly what *remorse* is; from "*Romola*" we may learn how suicidal is selfishness; may we not in "*Silas Marner*" discover something of the laws of a soul's ruin and recovery? The great poets also enable us to understand better what man is. "*Hamlet*," "*Macbeth*," "*King Lear*" take us into the deep places of our humanity. Of modern poets, Browning seems to me to understand, and to help others to understand better than any other, the soul, and even the Christian soul. General literature will not only stimulate our imagination, it will also make our own experience more intelligible to us.

4. There is a further service that the study of literature can offer to us. The preacher needs both words and style in preaching. The English language is very rich, but very few have a command of its treasures. A small stock of words is a distinct disadvantage to any preacher. Before he is done his language shows signs of wear and tear. It is often necessary to impress ideas by repetition ; but it spoils the effect of an address if the speaker cannot vary his language. A copious vocabulary can be gained only by much and varied reading. To confine oneself to theological books is to run the risk of using only a pulpit dialect, words unfamiliar to the hearers ; general literature must be read to keep the speech right. So also the more difficult matter of style can be effectively dealt with not by imitation of, but familiarity with, good authors. We must avoid fine writing, purple passages, rhetorical periods ; but a good style we should aim at, and that comes by keeping good literary company.

5. But, as was insisted on in the last lecture, these things belong to the mode of expression, the content to be communicated is truth for the reason, duty for the conscience. A study of the Bible, and the whole Bible, although not with the same minuteness in all parts, is necessary. To read the Bible in the chrono-

logical order of the books, so far as modern scholarship can fix that for us, with such knowledge of the dates, authorship, purpose, and occasion of each writing as a general introduction affords; in this way to follow the progress of the Divine revelation to men—this itself is a liberal education. When we have done this, then we can concentrate our attention on a special book or books, and with a good commentary make ourselves familiar with that. The more books of the Bible we are able to study in this way, the more will our own inner life be enriched and enlarged, and the more mighty shall we be in handling the sword of the Spirit. But we need to remind ourselves that the Bible does not contain the whole revelation of God, although it does contain the supreme revelation, without which the other would not have been adequately recognised as such. History and biography can reveal to us God's works and ways in the souls of men and the destinies of the nations. If we remember how much history and biography we have in the Holy Scriptures, how much prophecy is but an interpretation of history, and doctrine of experience, we shall have less hesitation in admitting how valuable to us this knowledge can be. Nature, too, is God's handiwork: and if any man is attracted to the study of science he may use the know-

ledge so gained in preaching. He may find analogies of spiritual laws in the natural world. But here there is a serious danger to be avoided. If the illustration cannot be understood without elaborate explanations in scientific terminology, it had better be avoided altogether. It must be simple, and capable of expression in common speech, if it is to interest and instruct.

6. One thing more may be mentioned as belonging to this general preparation. The mind needs to be disciplined to think, distinctly, consistently, and continuously. Some men have flashes of insight, rather than a steady light of intelligence ; and the intuitive minds have their value as well as the reasoning. But a man is better not to take for granted that he is a spiritual genius, and therefore needs no mental discipline. To know something about logic, the science of the process of thinking, is no disadvantage even to the genius. But probably the formal science is not so helpful in the practice of the art of true thinking as is reading of standard books on theology and ethics. To come into contact with the mind of a true thinker who is dealing with the truths of faith and duty is to learn how to think truly both in matter and in method. From such books we have to learn what the Gospel is that we are to preach, and also how we may present the

Gospel so that it may convince the reason and persuade the conscience of the hearer. The more intimate a preacher becomes with great thinkers the more does he discipline and so advance the development of his own powers of thought. To study carefully a book that is hard to follow because it is packed with thought, and closely reasoned, is far more profitable to the preacher as a thinker than to skim over many books which have no depth needing to be sounded in them. If a man wants to make others think on the highest things, he must be willing to learn how to think not only to understand himself, but to help others also to understand. This general preparation, then, involves the training of the whole mind as well as the whole man; and, although we cannot do all the study that is desirable, we can do as much as for us individually is possible; and a large and lofty ideal is more inspiring than a narrow and low aim.

### III

#### THE CHOICE OF A TEXT

THE personality of the preacher will inevitably affect his choice of a text. The truth of God presents different aspects to the mind, and the grace of God finds different approaches to the heart, according to the individuality. Some themes are very much more congenial than others: experience offers a clue to the meaning of some passages, as it does not to others. As the personality has its own place, and its proper part in all preaching, so it has in the choice of the text. Only the preacher must remember that he preaches, not to please himself, but to profit others; and that, therefore, their needs should be taken into account as well as his own wishes. The minister especially should aim at giving his people the whole counsel of God, unconfined by his own tastes. Yet with this

qualification a man will preach best on the texts that interest and impress himself most.

2. The general preparation also cannot but influence the choice of texts. The man who studies his Bible closely, and knows general literature well, should never lack texts and themes which he can happily wed to one another. As an incident in Scripture history is being read, some verse will readily suggest itself, in which the lesson of the story is most fully taught. As an argument in the prophetic or the apostolic writings is being followed, one verse will stand out from the context, as conveying most clearly the truth, which is being proved. A passage in poem or novel may suggest, not only a text, but even the mode of the treatment to be adopted. A preacher, who keeps the aims of his preaching before him in all his reading and study, should never lack texts. As texts thus suggest themselves to his mind, let him keep notes, not only of these, but also such themes or modes of treatment as presented themselves to his mind at the time, and he will gather a storehouse full for any demand.

3. There should be no need for hunting about for a text, or for waiting for a sudden impulse, or inspiration, as some preachers quite mistakenly call it. I have met with men who

wasted more than half the week in a vain search, or as vain a waiting, for this inspiration, and then had to rush through their preparation of the sermon itself in the last days, or even day. The Spirit does illumine the mind in presenting often familiar words in a fresh light, but honest and earnest study is the necessary condition of genuine illumination. What the preacher should aim at is always to have texts on which he wants to preach ; his own interest or the need of his hearers may determine on each occasion which he will choose. The Christian year will sometimes determine the subject ; Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, may properly suggest their appropriate themes. Other special circumstances may be allowed a legitimate influence in the selection.

4. A text may be chosen for its own sake, because we want to expound it, or because it presents or even suggests a subject with which we want to deal. Not every sermon must be expository ; the topical sermon is quite legitimate ; only the topic must be a Christian topic, it must have a permanent value, and not an ephemeral interest, it must instruct and inspire, and not merely excite curiosity or afford amusement. The objection many feel to the topical sermon is, because often a subject is chosen that is far from the

Christian centre, even it may be beyond the circumference of Christian faith and duty. If the subject be one of the truths of the Christian Gospel, the topical sermon has just as great value as the expository, as men want not only to understand the Bible, but also to know the Gospel. We must make sure, however, that the text really, and not only apparently, is concerned with the theme, that its application to the subject legitimately results from its exposition.

5. A few general counsels may be added. A text need not be one verse, it may be more or less, just as much or as little as may serve the purpose for which it is chosen, and as the literary, historical, or logical character of the passage from which it is taken may demand. A whole parable, or a whole psalm, if possessing the necessary unity, may be the text; a single phrase may be sufficient to suggest a subject. In selecting the text, however, regard should be given to the need of letting the mode of treatment grow out of the text itself, and not be joined on to it in an artificial manner. It is better to select a text which itself suggests the divisions to be adopted; an inexperienced preacher especially should take a text which offers fairly obvious heads, under which he can arrange his thoughts. If the text is studied

in its context, no arbitrary ingenuity should be necessary in the construction of the skeleton of the sermon ; but the structure should be an inevitable development of the text. Experts in preaching may cultivate the art of surprise in their treatment, but such a course is perilous for the beginner. Within the limits just indicated there is ample room for variety. Texts should not be selected because they are curious. “Ephraim is a cake not turned” (Hos. vii. 8) is the kind of text which it is generally desirable to avoid ; although, of course, there may be sometimes justification for such a selection. There are plenty of texts which so plainly teach the Gospel, that it is not necessary to go to the Old Testament to find texts to which Christian themes are artificially attached, although, of course, to show how the Gospel is the fulfilment of the religious thought and life of the saints of the old covenant is the proper aim of the Christian preacher. This choice of text cannot be reduced to rule, and every man, praying for Divine wisdom and grace, must prudently and sincerely seek what for himself is the best course.

## IV

### THE TREATMENT OF A TEXT

WHEN the text has been chosen, then must follow the special preparation in addition to the general already spoken of. The context must be carefully studied ; a commentary must be consulted to learn what is the exact meaning of the words, lest they should be understood by us in a wrong sense ; as much should be learned, if not already known, about the book in which the text is found, its authorship, date, purpose, occasion, as makes the text altogether intelligible to us. But at this stage at least other sermons on the text should be avoided ; and if the preacher wants really to put himself into his sermon he should have nothing to do with the too numerous aids to sermon manufacture supplied in outlines of sermons, &c. Let him do his best to walk on his own legs, instead of at once stretching out his hands for crutches. Let

him make up his own mind how he is going to treat the text.

2. Although it is desirable that there should be as much individual freedom in the method of handling a text as possible, yet the lessons of experience may be profitably passed on. Whether the heads of a sermon are intimated to the congregation or not, the preacher should have a distinct skeleton in his own mind. As a rule, the hearers prefer to know what the sermon aims at, and to have aids given both to their intelligence and their memory, so as to apprehend and remember the sermon. Of course, the elaborate divisions and sub-divisions of former days are rightly discarded ; but three or four divisions simply, and, if possible, memorably stated, without any ostentatious parade of the structure of the sermon, are generally welcome. The preacher at least should not begin to write or think out his sermon in details until he has its general plan clearly before his own mind. He should know both his goal and the course that leads to it.

3. As has already been indicated, a sermon may be either expository or topical, or in numerous and varied ways intermediate between the two. The absolutely expository sermon would deal with a text word after word, clause after clause, until the whole had been explained. Only

experts in Biblical scholarship could use this method effectively, and it is not likely to be adopted by lay preachers. The entirely topical sermon would treat the different aspects of the subject chosen without any direct reference to any text, but as the explanation and enforcement of the subject itself might require, and the text would, in respect to a time-honoured custom, be attached to the sermon quite loosely, perhaps by the mention of one word, suggesting the subject, in the text. Thus, a sermon on peace, dealing with arbitration in industrial as well as international affairs, might be joined to the text, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. v. 9), without any reference at all to the Divine reconciliation, which makes it possible for men to become children of God, ministers of human reconciliation. Without affirming that such a course is never justifiable, I venture to believe that it is generally very undesirable; and that in preaching the Gospel we should also, as far as possible, seek to be explaining the Bible. Even if a subject is only suggested by a text, the suggestion should be justified by a brief exposition of the text. Thus the phrase in Isa. lxi. 3, "A garland for ashes," might be used as text of a sermon on the transformation of sorrow into joy in the Christian faith, but the Eastern custom should first of all be explained,

and then the occasion of the prophecy—the return of Israel from exile—should be so described as easily and fitly to lead the mind on to the greater salvation in the more distant future. To disregard text and context in even a topical sermon is to lose a great deal for the most effective treatment of the subject that a study of these would suggest.

4. There is, however, an intermediate mode of treatment, which, as deserving commendation, demands explanation. It has often been said that a sermon should contain only one thought. That statement needs some explanation. There ought to be abundant subsidiary thoughts, and even as many primary thoughts, as the text itself suggests; but certainly it is desirable, if possible, to have only one subject, and to use these primary thoughts suggested by the text as aspects of that one subject. Thus there can be brought into happy union the topical and the expository methods. Let us take John iii. 16. If treated by the purely expository method, each word of any significance would be explained in due order, God—loved—world—gave—only-begotten Son—whosoever—believeth in Him—not perish—eternal life, and then the syntactical structure of the sentence would be made plain to bring out the connection of clauses. If dealt with topically, the Christian

salvation might be taken as the subject, and from the text such aspects of it might be taken as the following: (1) Its motive—God's love; (2) its cost—the gift of the only-begotten Son; (3) its aim—to secure for the perishing eternal life; (4) its claim on man—faith alone. The main thoughts might be taken separately, thus: The love of God, the gift of Christ, the need of man, the duty of each man. This treatment, however, would lack the unity of the former, which, however, does not keep close enough to the text. The unity desired could be attained by treating each main thought suggested in the text as an aspect of the subject which the text is most directly concerned with—God's love. We should then get an outline such as this: (1) The nature of God's love—generous, it gives; (2) the measure of God's love—the only-begotten Son; (3) the object of God's love—sinful mankind; (4) the need of God's love—man perishing; (5) the claim of God's love—faith.

## V

### VARIOUS MODES OF TREATING A TEXT

WE have already noticed the two most contrasted modes of treating a text, the *expository* and the *topical*, and two intermediate modes, which may be called the *analytical* (the treatment of the thought in each part of the text separately), and the *synthetical* (the presentation of each of these thoughts as interpreting one subject). This does not by any means exhaust the ways of dealing with a text, and the greatest liberty, so long as it does not degenerate into the licence of artificiality and arbitrariness, is to be encouraged. As preaching is to be the expression and exercise of the personality of the preacher, it is most undesirable to reduce it rigidly to rules; yet the inexperienced preacher will develop himself most effectively by accepting such guidance as the experience of others can afford him.

2. Accordingly we shall pursue this matter a

little further, and describe various modes in which texts can be dealt with. When a text states a truth that awakens wonder, surprise, question, an appropriate method of handling it is the *interrogative*. We may set ourselves the task of answering the questions that the text raises in our minds. Paul's statement, "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. xiii. 13), makes us ask ourselves, Why are these three graces permanent? and why is love the greatest of the three? To put the answers briefly: (1) because man is always dependent, progressive, and social, and (2) because, while faith and hope are receptive, as God is not, love alone is communicative, as God is. Closely connected with this method is one that may be named the *corrective*. As we read a text we may recognise that it *corrects* some error we have fallen into regarding Christian faith and duty. If we have reason to believe that this error is common, and that its correction would be profitable, we may treat the text according to this method. Jesus' word, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 39), correct three mistakes: Our separation of faith and works; our distinction of piety and philanthropy; our opposition of God and man. God in Christ so identifies Himself

with man that ministry to man is service to God, in which faith can and must energise. Again, a text may *suggest* different aspects of a subject in which we are interested, and, if we make clear that we are not giving an exposition of the text, we may use this *suggestive* method. For instance, if we want to deal with the duty of home mission work, we may take the words in Luke xiv. 23, "Go out into the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," and may derive from it by suggestion these heads : (1) The sacrifice of the work, "Go out"; (2) the scope of the work, "the highways and hedges," that is, everywhere; (3) the difficulty of the work, "compel them"; (4) the purpose of the work, "to come in"; (5) the issue of the work, "that my house may be filled."

3. Sometimes when a truth or duty does not need so much to be explained as to be applied in various relations to faith and life, we may use the *illustrative* method. Thus John iii. 5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," may be illustrated by its application to Jesus Himself, to the Pharisees whom Nicodemus represented, and to mankind generally, and the heads of the sermon might be : (1) The personal reminiscence ; (2) the historical rebuke ;

(3) the general requirement. Or the duty of peacemaking (Matt. v. 9) might be viewed in relation to home, friendship, industry, society, nations. Should we feel that the varied aspects of one theme can be best presented by bringing together a number of texts, we may use the *connective* method, in which the occurrence of the same word in the different texts may, but need not always, suggest the connection. To take a very obvious instance. Paul, in Gal. vi., speaks twice of burden-bearing, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (ver. 2), and "Every man shall bear his own burden" (ver. 5). This cannot but recall to us the words of the Psalmist, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Psa. lv. 22). We can connect the texts as aspects of one subject, bringing out the difference as well as the unity, thus: (1) My individual care; (2) our mutual care; (3) God's universal care. Instead of starting from, we may lead the minds of our hearers up to, the truth taught in our text. This might be called the *demonstrative* method. The claim of Jesus, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father but by me" (John xiv. 6), might be thus proved: (1) Man is everywhere religious; (2) in his religion he seeks to know that he may trust and serve God; (3) God has not left Himself

without witness in nature and history. But (4), the perfect revelation of God as Father has come only in Christ. Or we may from our text *deduce* certain truths or duties. Thus from Christ's words, "Apart from me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5), we may learn that we should come to Him for His grace, learn of Him His truth, follow Him in loving companionship, and take His yoke in loyal service. We might from John's statement, "God is love" (1 John iv. 8), with the guidance of 1 Cor. xiii. 4-8, deduce what God will be to us and do for us.

## VI

### THE TREATMENT OF VARIOUS SUBJECTS

IT was pointed out in a previous lecture that the text of a sermon or address might be more than a verse, a whole passage, which offered sufficient unity of interest and purpose to be treated in this way. Some counsels on the treatment of such a theme may be offered. The nature of the passage must determine the kind of treatment, and it is, therefore, desirable to deal with several examples. A psalm sometimes shows its beauty of structure only when dealt with as a whole.

Psalm xxiii. may serve as an instance. Usually it is referred to as if it contained only one picture—that of the Shepherd and his Sheep; but this figure ends with verse 4, and verses 5 and 6 present to us the picture of a Host and his Guest; and the psalm declares not only the gifts of God's Providence, but also the grace of His Redemption. Each picture should be as

vividly presented as possible to the imagination of the hearers (this demands some knowledge of Eastern customs), and then God's bounty and care, guidance and guardianship on the one hand, and the sacrifice His salvation of men costs and the satisfaction which it offers on the other hand, should be set forth.

Psalm lxxxiv. is probably a pilgrim psalm, sung as the worshippers went up to Jerusalem at one of the great festivals. It requires some sympathetic imagination to discover and to exhibit its structure. The following may indicate one way of treatment : The pilgrim catches his first glimpse of the temple (ver. 1); he presses on eagerly (ver. 2); he feels as much at home in the temple as the bird that has reached its nest (ver. 3); he congratulates a priest he meets on his happiness in his ministry (ver. 4); the priest assures him that his desire to go up to Jerusalem to worship his God must have made him happy too, regardless of the hardships of the long pilgrimage (vers. 5-7); the pilgrim then offers his prayer, and remembers the high priest in it (vers. 8, 9); as he withdraws he thinks it better for him to be even a door-keeper in the temple than to go to his home among the heathen (ver. 10); but he remembers that God will go with him to take care of him, and resolves to walk worthy of the Divine

favour (ver. 11); and so he starts in glad trust (ver. 12).

2. A parable may next engage our attention. What is important in treating a parable is to find out the truth it is meant to teach and to make that the subject, drawing from the story only what illustrates or enforces this main purpose. Allegorising or finding a spiritual significance in every detail must especially be avoided. The parables of the unjust judge (Luke xviii. 1-8) and the friend at midnight (Luke xi. 5-9) are intended solely to teach importunity in prayer, and we need not ask ourselves wherein God resembles the persons mentioned, over whom the importunity prevails. Luke xv. is not intended to distinguish the different functions of the persons of the Godhead in the work of salvation, as has been conjectured; it is doubtful even if the three parables are meant to teach the same truth. The first two teach the worth of even *one* soul, the third teaches the contrast between the Divine and the Pharisaic attitude to sinners. As the parable of the Prodigal is rather an individual instance than a poetical symbol of the moral and religious truth taught, it necessarily in its details suggests much more than its main lesson about the nature of God and man, sin and judgment, penitence and pardon;

and it seems legitimate to treat it as a summary, though not complete, of Christ's theology. With this caution about avoiding allegorising, and care in finding out from the context as well as the parable itself what it is meant to teach, what has been already said about the *synthetic* method may be applied to the handling of a parable.

3. We may take as a third instance the presentation of a Scripture character. Only one incident may be mentioned from which we must learn all we can know of the character, or there may be frequent references, by a combination of which we must form our estimate. Elaborate description and minute narrative must be avoided. In preaching we are not painting scenes or telling stories; we are seeking to make known Divine grace and human duty. We must omit all that is irrelevant, and emphasise only what is significant for our purpose. As there is unity in human life, we must try to discover what is the one characteristic, or what are the few characteristics, that are prominent and dominant, and must subordinate all else to exhibiting our unified conception. Thus if we take Peter's character, Jesus' reception of him (John i. 42), his confession and rebuke of Jesus (Matt. xvi. 16, 22), his refusal to let Jesus wash his feet, and his

request that his whole body should be washed (John xiii. 8, 9), his boast and his denial (Luke xxii. 33, 58), his plea for the freedom of the Gentiles (Acts xv. 10, 11), and his surrender to the prejudices of the Judaisers (Gal. ii. 11-13), all prove his impulsive, and consequently inconsistent, nature. These contrasts, briefly described in order, might serve very effectively to enforce a warning against moral and religious instability. One incident may reveal a character and convey the warning or encouragement it is fitted to give. The story told in the ninth chapter of the Fourth Gospel exhibits the character of the blind man, on three features of which emphasis might be laid: his trust in, his trial for, and his task from Christ. We can trace a development through a discipline from the first germs to the full-grown faith in Jesus. A single verse sometimes puts a character before us, as in Num. xiv. 24, describing Caleb's consecration, courage, and consistency.

4. The miracles of Jesus have attracted many preachers. To treat the narrative allegorically is very often to miss the most valuable lesson that it conveys. If we will study the story carefully we shall usually find some utterance of Divine grace or human faith recorded, in which the significance of the incident is concentrated. The centurion's appeal to Jesus

as both under and exercising authority (Matt. viii. 9) is the central interest of the narrative, as Jesus' warm approval shows. The saying recognises (1) the power of Jesus to heal even without His bodily presence, and (2) the condition of the exercise of that authority—submission to the will of God. From this saying we might learn the general truth that obedience is the condition of authority. The question of Jesus, “Who touched my garments?”, with the evangelist's explanation of the motive of the question (Mark v. 30), calls attention to some features of His miracles that are often overlooked and yet are full of encouragement for us: (1) His sensitive sympathy—a slight touch is enough to let Him know that need appeals to Him; (2) His instant response—He meets the need without delay or question; (3) His constant sacrifice—even His miracles cost Him virtue, the expenditure of vital energy; (4) His gracious purpose—He not only seeks to heal the body, but also by such personal dealing as with the woman cured to assure of personal salvation. In the record of the feeding of the five thousand we may lay emphasis on (1) the compassion, which is the motive; (2) the multiplication, which is the method; (3) the satisfaction, which is the result; and (4) the economy, which is the enhancement of the miracle; but

for a practical lesson we may especially call attention to the appeal for human counsel and the acceptance of human help which is recorded (John vi. 5, 11).

5. A passage of Scripture may prove so rich in suggestion to us that we may feel that a series of sermons can be preached upon it. Thus the parable of the Prodigal Son does offer us a series of texts for dealing with God's Fatherhood and man's sonship, the nature of sin as departure from God, the penalty of sin as moral and spiritual want, repentance as self-discovery and self-recovery, pardon as restoration of the interrupted relation of man as son to God as Father. The third chapter of Philippians, verses 4 to 14, set before us very clearly and thoroughly Paul's experience, each feature of which might be the subject of a sermon—his complete surrender to Christ, his confident faith in Christ for justification, his personal union with Christ, his earnest desire for the resurrection, his humble sense of imperfection, his steadfast and strenuous purpose of progress in sanctification. There is an undoubted advantage for preacher and hearers alike that there should be as clear an apprehension and as full an appreciation of the Gospel as possible, and the preparation of a series of such addresses is to be commended. Of course, the texts need

not, as in the two instances just mentioned, be taken from the same passage, although personally I have found this course profitable, but it adds to the interest if there is some connecting link. Thus we might take what may be called Paul's autobiographical references as texts for sermons on his Gospel: his Pharisaic satisfaction (Phil. iii. 4), his moral discovery (Rom. vii. 7), his personal misery (ver. 24), his violent conversion (1 Cor. xv. 8), his complete submission (Phil. iii. 7), his glorying in the power of the Cross (Gal. vi. 14), his personal union with Christ (Gal. ii. 20), his purpose to make progress (Phil. iii. 13, 14), his confident hope (2 Tim. iv. 8).

## VII

### GATHERING MATERIALS

WHEN the text has been chosen and the mode of treatment has been decided on, then comes the task of gathering the materials. It has already been pointed out (1) that the general preparation, of whatever kind it may be, should so enrich and enlarge the mind as to make it a storehouse from which the materials of preaching can be freely drawn; and (2) that the study of the context generally should present to the mind abundant thoughts for the treatment of the subject. The latter should determine the primary thoughts in the exposition, and the former the subsidiary thought in the illustration of the subject. If, however, these two sources of the materials of preaching do not yield copious supplies, there must be a serious and steady search made for the appropriate and effective contents of the sermon.

2. It seems to me of importance that time should be allowed for this. An attempt made in haste and often in worry, to get something to say as quickly as possible, is not likely to be crowned with success. Let the text, divisions, and subject be in the mind for some time; let the thoughts gather freely without constraint round the theme; let experience as well as reading offer its contributions for the exposition and illustration. It may be useful to take notes as any thought bearing on the subject presents itself. When the material has been gathered, then the process of sifting and ordering has to be begun. Only what is strictly relevant, what will make the presentation of the subject effective, is to be admitted. An illustration is not to be used simply because it is in itself interesting, if it does not make the subject itself more intelligible and inspiring. What cannot be worked easily into the structure of the sermon must be left out, as it will be not only a burden to the speaker, but also to his hearers. A criticism I once heard on a sermon is worth repeating: "The preacher said too many things." There was a distraction of the attention, a scattering of the interest, that left an uncomfortable feeling in the hearer. Illustrations, quotations, phrases, ideas, should not be so prominent apart from the context

as to arrest undue attention, and so mar the impression of the sermon as a whole. Those who read their sermons may not need for their own comfort to exclude so rigidly all that is not essential, although for the advantage of their hearers it would be as well if they would keep out all that they cannot easily remember themselves; but those who speak should not put a strain on their memory by trying to include what is not so relevant to the subject that it requires a distinct effort of memory to bring it in at the right place.

3. One has to admit that there are two types of sermons, one of which may be called the discursive and the other the demonstrative; and that different men seem to be more at home in the one than in the other. The discursive method seems to be directed by the laws of association of ideas, although to another mind the association does sometimes appear forced or fanciful. The demonstrative method follows more closely the strictly logical processes, and there is a greater unity in the argument. Although my own preference is very decidedly for the second method, yet, as many eminent preachers adopt the first, its legitimacy cannot be denied. Unless a man is gifted with an extraordinarily good memory, the discursive sermon would need to be written

and read. If the preacher is a ready speaker a full outline may suffice for the demonstrative sermon. But even the ready speaker should write a great deal, not for use in the pulpit, but that he may keep his vocabulary varied and his style correct, as the danger of much speaking without writing is that the language becomes slipshod. Whether the sermon is to be a read or a spoken one, determines what kind of preparation of the materials should be made. Having arranged his notes in what seems the best order, the writer of the discursive sermon may set about weaving together the varied threads according to the pattern that he has decided on. The speaker of the demonstrative sermon should write an outline, in which point follows point with a measure of logical necessity. It may be for his advantage, after having thus fixed the logical structure of his sermon, to write it out fully, not to read it or to attempt to remember it, but by this exercise to discipline himself to speak more freely and forcefully upon the subject. So also, even if a sermon is to be read, it will be profitable to make an outline of it, as in so doing the reader will make himself more familiar with its course of thought, and will consequently read it more effectively. A course to be avoided is to have merely jottings

—single words or phrases, put down without the links between them, as the sermon delivered with the use of such notes only is likely to be disjointed. Even the outline should consist of carefully worded sentences, each linked to each in a continuous chain of thought; it should read as a summary of which the spoken sermon is the expansion, four or five spoken sentences for each one written. Quotations it is better to write out clearly on separate sheets of paper; but the preacher who speaks is not likely to use quotations as freely as the preacher who reads, and the demonstrative type of sermon allows less scope for quotations than the discursive. To the subject of quotations and illustrations we must afterwards return.

## VIII

### ILLUSTRATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

REFERENCE has already been made to the value of the general preparation for preaching, in affording varied and interesting illustrations and quotations, but a warning has also been given that whatever material of this kind is used ought to be strictly relevant. This warning may be here made more explicit and emphatic. A preacher abuses his sacred vocation who uses it for the display of his extensive knowledge or varied culture. It is not a literary entertainment, or an æsthetic enjoyment, that it is his one business to afford his hearers. His reading and taste may assuredly be consecrated in the service of preaching; but the moral and religious purpose must dominate every other interest. No illustration or quotation must be introduced for its own sake, but only to explain the truth or enforce the duty being taught.

2. The quotation or illustration should be

given accurately. To a ready speaker a quotation may suggest itself even as he is speaking, and, so treacherous is memory, he may make a slight slip in quoting. I am not so rigorous as to suggest that he should never run that risk; but whenever possible quotations should be verified before being used; the preacher who does not read his sermon is better to have his quotations at least written down. As regards illustrations, care should be taken that they will not prove a betrayal of ignorance. It has been reported that the late Mr. Spurgeon advised his students to use agricultural illustrations at the sea-shore and maritime in the country, so that their hearers could not detect their mistakes. If that counsel was really given, it was probably given in jest, and should not be followed. Accuracy, even in small matters, will be the aim of the preacher of truth.

3. In this connection, a warning may be given against the religious anecdotes that are so plentifully supplied for the use of preachers, which often give a very false view of life and duty. The abnormally good little boy who died young was only too common in books written for children a generation ago. Discrimination must be constantly exercised; and what from our knowledge of human nature seems improbable should be avoided in the sermon, as the

use of incredible illustrations for intelligent hearers invests the whole utterance with an appearance of unreality. Of course, there are instances of saintliness and heroism so exceptional as to appear improbable ; but when such are used the names and dates and other historical circumstances should be mentioned. Illustrations may be drawn from fiction, but it should not be represented as fact, as it is to be feared is too often the case in the anecdote.

4. Illustrations and quotations alike should be simple. The scientific or artistic illustration that requires an introductory disquisition on science or art is quite out of place in the sermon. As it is used as a help to explain the subject being dealt with, it should not itself require explanation. That explanation may be very instructive and interesting, but it distracts attention from the theme on which the preacher is seeking to fix the thoughts of his hearers. The more culture a man has, the greater is the danger of his forgetting that what seems quite simple to him would need much explaining to others. The same rule of simplicity applies also to quotations. If the hearer cannot take in the meaning and aim of the passage quoted at once, and needs to try and remember it and ponder over it afterwards, his attention is distracted, and so the quotation is not a help but a hin-

drance. What the preacher did not understand when he first read it he should not quote.

5. Simplicity of illustration will be secured as a rule by familiarity. Jesus in His parables did not go far afield for His illustrations, but found them close at hand in field or shore, in street or house; familiarity here does not breed contempt. The preacher can give freshness to the familiar by the use he makes of it, by wedding it to truth that is not so familiar. Thus he brings out of his treasury things new and old. He may thus elevate and sanctify the homely. The woman seeking her lost coin is invested with the dignity of God's search for the soul. An observant mind and a sympathetic heart will find in common human life material to illustrate the Gospel in its numerous and varied aspects. But the familiar must not become the commonplace. The suggestion must not be so obvious as to leave no sense of novelty. When the same illustration has been frequently used it loses its interest. So, too, the quotation that has become hackneyed.

6. But while there should be familiarity, there should also be dignity. Our Lord's illustrations are always homely, but never vulgar. It is not always easy to define the frontier between the familiar and the vulgar; but any

sensitive, refined nature feels instinctively when an illustration elevates or degrades. As there may be an artificial dignity, so also there may be an arbitrary vulgarity. The modes of speech of one class may offend the taste of another, because forbidden by social convention, although they may be only more direct and simple. That delightful study of the life of the Glasgow working-class, "Wee Macgregor," was condemned by many superior persons as "so vulgar." But conventional manners may often be much more vulgar than natural, and straightforward speech may be often less vulgar than phrases of courtesy. Yet there is a vulgarity, not confined to the ways of any one class, to be carefully shunned.

7. One form of this vulgarity is the introduction of one's own personal history into public speech. There are occasions when personal experience may be properly appealed to as testimony to the truth and the worth of the Gospel; but such reference should be in the interests of the Gospel, and not for the display of self. Some men seem to think that their own conversion is the only effective illustration of the saving grace of Christ that can be given, and so they repeat the story often with a lack of reticence about the sins of their former life, which is most offensive to fine feeling.

Others delight in talking about the number of their converts, ostensibly to magnify the grace of God, but really to gratify their own vanity. A man will speak as little about himself or his work as possible, and if he does speak, it will be only when and as God requires it of him as a necessary sacrifice in this holy service of making known His Gospel.

8. It is a very difficult question how far humour is allowable in the pulpit in the illustrations and quotations used. There is a touch of humour in our Lord's comparison of His own generation to children (Matt. xi. 16, 17), or His description of the long robes, chief seats, and street-corner prayers of the Pharisees (Matt. vi. 5; xxiii. 5, 6). And humour is one of the great, and not mean, endowments of man. Not a few preachers would be saved from absurdity by the saving touch of humour. Worse things may be heard in a church than a laugh. Yet, if the humour is spontaneous and natural to a man, it must be carefully restrained so that it shall not detract from the solemnity and the sanctity of the message delivered. Humour for its own sake, or to advertise the preacher, and to attract the hearers, is a grievous offence ; but the humour that conveys truth more vividly, and interprets life more genially, need not be altogether banished from preaching. Yet the

dangers here are so many, that abstinence is perhaps the safer course for most men.

9. There is one caution that needs very much to be given. Some preachers altogether overdo their illustrations. Their sermons consist of very many big but often cheap beads of illustrations and quotations, kept together by a very thin thread of thought, sometimes even by little more than a repetition of the text. Sunsets, and waterfalls, and flowers, and birds, are not necessary to every sermon; still less should descriptions of scenery form the greater part of a sermon. A man who professes to be delivering a message which is either a savour of life unto life or of death unto death to his hearers should have neither the time nor the taste for such elegant and superficial trifling. Preaching is not art or poetry, although it may use both. Admiration of nature in it should be swallowed up in adoration of God. The man in whom the word of the Lord burns will never make merely a picture or a poem out of his sermon.

10. Although I have offered these counsels regarding the use of illustrations and quotations, yet I must frankly confess that as a preacher I make very scanty use of either of these helps in preaching. The text, when I have meditated upon it, suggests so much in the way of its

simple, direct, and practical interpretation and application that I do not feel the need of seeking illustrations. I do not mention this as an example to be followed, as probably most hearers do want the relief, as I have heard it called, of such illustrations and quotations; but only again to vindicate what I have insisted on before, that rules in preaching are for guidance, and not for restraint, and that personality must be expressed and exercised in preaching. I must defer to next lecture an indication of the method of preaching that most strongly appeals to my own personality.

## IX

### THE INTEREST OF A SERMON

SOME counsels regarding the structure of a sermon, the observance of which may in some measure compensate for the paucity of illustrations or quotations, may be offered for those who, like myself, do not take kindly to the other course. It is surely a matter of common observation that many sermons, which at the time of delivery made an impression, are very soon forgotten. There is a vague sense of pleasure or profit which survives, but no distinct recollections. If a preacher believes (and if he does not, why does he preach?) that his message has a permanent value for the Christian life of his hearers, he must desire that his sermon should not be forgotten almost as soon as it is heard. Desiring this, he should make it his aim to throw his material into such a shape that it will be easily remembered. A sermon without any definite structure, which

even the preacher himself could not remember as regards its outline, is not likely to linger long in the memory of any of his hearers. Although it is not generally the fashion now to have distinct divisions, and to indicate them explicitly, it seems to me an interest is added to a sermon if such help is given to the memory. These heads must not be long, formal propositions, theses to be expounded, defended, and enforced. But the subject being dealt with should be expressed in as telling and memorable a phrase as possible. Might not a sermon on James i. 23-25, be entitled "Life's Mirror Moments"? Sensationalism and vulgarity may be avoided, and yet interest may at the outset be awakened. Then the different aspects of the subject which are to be dealt with should be described in as brief and pregnant phrases as possible. I have found it a help to my own memory sometimes to have resort to alliterations. Let the significant word in each head begin with the same letter. Not children only, but some adults will welcome this help to memory. Of course artificiality and arbitrariness must be avoided. An illustration may be given. Rev. iii. 20 might be dealt with as follows: (1) Christ's Attitude, (2) Christ's Appeal, (3) Christ's Assurance. Again, an assonance may be helpful. In dealing with the Resurrection the three

aspects of the subject might be thus described : (1) Historical, (2) Mystical, (3) Prophetical. May not fancy even be indulged ? The phrase in 1 Tim. i. 11, Revised Version, "the Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God," may be compared to the three parts of the ancient Tabernacle : (1) the outer court—the Gospel ; (2) the holy place—the glory ; (3) the holy of holies — the blessed God ; and it might be shown how through the Gospel we approach the manifested perfection of God in Christ, and how through Christ we have access to the life of God Himself.

2. In the structure of the sermon we must not only seek to assist the memory, but we must try also to stimulate the imagination. In order to do this we must ourselves not only conceive the truth as thought, but perceive it as life. To make clear this perhaps dark saying we must realise that the words of our text do not simply express ideas, they testify experience. There is moral and spiritual life as well as intellectual meaning in them. A knowledge of the whole context, the personality expressing himself, the conditions and the purposes of the utterance, helps us to realise often for ourselves, and thus to present to others vividly and sympathetically the person and the scene ; the heavy burden or the lofty

flight, the severe struggle or the glad triumph, the haunting doubt or the comforting assurance, the human extremity or the Divine opportunity may thus be vitally realised by us, and then the words become living words for us. It is a serious mistake and a grievous loss to detach the words of Scripture from the history of human need and Divine grace from which they come to us. The teaching of Jesus must not be taken as an abstract, formal theological creed or ethical code. His own life is in His words, as well as the life of those to whom He was speaking. Take His words about the birth from above to Nicodemus. How many preachers would discuss simply the doctrine of regeneration as formulated in the theological schools, with perhaps a few introductory sentences about the time, place, and persons. This external description does not help us to realise the words as life. Let us realise that Jesus was giving a reminiscence as well as making a requirement. He had passed through the baptism of water, when He fulfilled all righteousness in dedicating Himself to His calling as the Saviour of men, He had received the baptism of the Spirit as supernatural power after this self-dedication, and it was to this experience in His own life He doubtless made reference in declaring the necessity of

being born "of water and the Spirit" (John iii. 5). What this requirement as applied to Nicodemus himself meant should next be indicated as concretely as possible with as close reference as can be to his position, beliefs, and habits as a Pharisee. Then the general truth will not appear abstract doctrine, but actual experience, which we do not ask men to believe, but to live. Or take the words of Jesus, "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41). Is not Gethsemane itself, the struggle of Jesus there, the vital interpretation of them? The words of Hosea regarding the change of Jehovah's name from Baali to Ishi (chap. ii. 16) throb with agony and affection, when we recover his experience by an imaginative sympathy. Paul's letters are not dry and hard doctrine; they are for those who understand the confessions of a suffering and struggling yet always victorious soul.

3. The preacher will not altogether fail to interest who conveys sympathy. There is experience not only in his message, there is experience also in those to whom it is addressed. As the preacher realises what Paul felt, let him also strive to realise what his hearers are feeling. Before him are gathered men and women who need help, guidance, comfort, cheer, who bring their insufficiency that

through the preacher there may reach them in some measure the sufficiency of God. It is not enough then after dealing with the experience that lies behind his text, that he should give an abstract statement about truth or duty ; his exposition of, and application to, his hearers of the text should be living. Whether the preacher reads or speaks, he should in his preparation try to visualise his congregation ; he should have in an imagination that is vitalised by sympathy an audience not of vaguely conceived souls, but of men and women as he knows them actually to be. He should not only occasionally bring in illustrations from human life, but all his discourse should be about human life as it is for the love and the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Quotations and illustrations have their place and their use in preaching, but what I am convinced is more important is that the preacher should not conceive his message as doctrine, but perceive it as experience. If truth and grace live for us so that we can make them living to others, I am persuaded that our preaching will be interesting. Let the preacher realise as present the Saviour offering His grace and the soul of man feeling its need, and His message will not be dull and dry, but refreshing and inspiring. Aim, then, in the preparation of sermons at conveying to

others in the Gospel you commend the sympathy you feel, and the understanding and insight that sympathy gives, with their needs and longings ; and your preaching will be alive.

4. Memory, imagination, sympathy should all be recognised in the structure of a sermon. One more counsel may be added. The minister who teaches Sunday after Sunday may sometimes need to take up topics that are not altogether congenial to him, and in the treatment of which he himself does not, as it were, catch fire. But the lay preacher can surely choose only such subjects as move him deeply. Intense emotion, not forced, and, therefore, unreal, but spontaneous and sincere, seems to me a condition of effective preaching which is too often ignored. There is an emotionalism which is perilous and injurious, but surely the preacher of the Gospel cannot but feel intensely and passionately the truth and grace of Jesus Christ. Without exposing himself to undue strain, or inflicting on his hearers undue stress of emotion throughout his sermon, he should surely so select and so arrange his material that the fervour grows, and not only grows in himself, but becomes increasingly contagious, until one elevated mood possesses speaker and hearers alike. Vivid imagination and vital sympathy will stimulate and sustain this

vigorous emotion in the preacher. Whatever literary interest there may be about a sermon, surely it is not effective for the highest ends of preaching unless it makes a deep impression on the heart of the hearers. Therefore in preparation the preacher ought always to consider whether what he intends to preach will set his own soul aglow or will leave himself cold ; for it is quite certain that the preacher will not move others unless he himself is moved. The complaint about dull sermons is often really a charge of coldness in the preacher. The call for sermons made interesting by anecdote, and other devices, is really a desire for intense and vigorous life in the preacher.

## X

### THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE

IN the composition of a sermon the words to be used should be carefully considered. The written sermon allows a selection to be made when writing, and not the first word that comes should be written down unless it is also the best word of which the writer can think. When the sermon is spoken the speaker cannot pick and choose his words, but must go on with such words as most easily come to him. But he, too, can improve his choice of language. The speaker ought to write a good deal, and in writing, to be very careful about his language, so that he gets into good habits of speech. If in writing he is always on the outlook for the best word, in speaking the best word will readily come to him. For a speaker especially, it is necessary to have an abundant vocabulary, so that even as he speaks he may have several words to choose from that which seems best.

This can be got only by extensive and varied reading, and especially of general literature. The preacher who confines his reading too much to theological books will get into the habit of using language not understood of the common people. The study of poetry especially gives a man a command of good language. When the speaker has this abundant vocabulary, what are the principles he should follow in selecting the words to be used?

2. The first principle of selection is *simplicity*. This is contrary to the practice of some of the famous English writers, and a tradition of "fine writing" that still lingers in some newspaper offices. "The individual proceeded to his residence," is thought grander by some people than "the man went home." But there can be no doubt that the preacher should prefer the latter. Foreign words and phrases, *Zeitgeist*, *esprit de corps*, *prima facie*, and such like, should be avoided. The short English words should be chosen rather than the longer words of Latin or Greek origin in which our book-language abounds. Of course, there is an artificial simplicity that is an affectation. We need not use words becoming obsolete, nor do we need to make words of English derivation to take the place of the aliens which have come to be quite at home in our speech; *foreword* for *preface*

is not to be commended. Sentences of single-syllable words would often lack rhythm, and that has to be considered. The rule is, use the simplest word that is familiar to the hearers, best expresses the meaning, and does not spoil the sound of the sentence. The Authorised Version of the Bible is the greatest example in our literature of the beauty and melody of simple speech.

3. A second principle of selection is *variety*. The same word should not be too frequently repeated. It is often necessary to repeat the thought, but if the language is not to become tiresome to the hearer the words must, as far as can be, be changed. It is a sign of a very poor vocabulary if a speaker has to be using the same word over and over again. The many sources from which our language is drawn allows for this variety. A third principle is *concreteness*, by which is meant the use of words that call up pictures rather than those that only suggest ideas. *Do not speak about humanity, but about the man, the woman, the child.* Do not say so much about the realisation of ideals as about the tender heart, the kind word, the helpful deed ! Use the language of life, and not the dialect of the schools. Jesus stated general principles in particular instances. He did not say, Do not retaliate, but, "bless those that

curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." The language used should set the imagination at work, rather than exercise the intellect. A fourth principle is *precision*; let the words used express the thought as distinctly and as adequately as possible, so as to convey to the hearer nothing else and nothing less than the sense intended by the speaker. How often through carelessness a speaker is understood to mean something altogether different from what he wanted to say. In communicating Christian truth *ambiguity* is to be avoided. The great theological terms should not be used when something else than is generally understood by them is intended. If an unusual meaning is being put on a word, let that be candidly explained.

4. A closing caution should be added. It is being recognised that the language of the pulpit should be conversational rather than literary; but it must be dignified conversation. There must be an elevation such as becomes the theme and the surroundings. Slang words, slipshod phrases, contractions of words, such as abound in the talk of the man in the street, are not at all fitting for the man in the pulpit. Even the man in the street does not like to be talked down to; he does not like the familiarity that argues contempt. There may be dignity

without pomposity, there may be simplicity without vulgarity. No rule about the words permissible in the pulpit can be so effective as the speaker's reverence for the message committed to him, for the souls of men, to whom the message is to be addressed, and for himself as privileged, though but an earthen vessel, to be entrusted with the heavenly treasure of the Gospel of God's grace. A lack of dignity in the pulpit is due to an imperfect appreciation of the solemnity and sanctity of the preacher's mission for God to men.

## XI

### ATTENTION TO STYLE

NOT only must the words chosen be fit, but attention must be given to the style of the composition of the sentences. The spoken sermon cannot be expected to be quite as finished and polished, but attention to style, when writing, will help to improve even the method of speech.

Grammatical correctness is, of course, the first thing that must be attended to. There may be a little irregularity in the structure of spoken sentences that may be pardonable, but there are glaring blunders not uncommon, that are offensive to any educated hearer. A few instances may be given. "Between you and *I*," is a not uncommon phrase, but there is no justification for it, as the preposition governs the accusative. "*It's me*" has become so common as to be almost idiomatic. "*It is him*" transgresses the rule about the verb to

be having the same case after as before it. "And which," when another relative clause does not precede, but perhaps a participial clause, violates the rule about the co-ordination of clauses. If the Scot does not always manage the *shall* of the first person future properly, some parts of England do not use the *will* of the second and third persons rightly. One sometimes hears a sentence like this, "The man and his wife *is* leaving," or "The man with his wife *are* leaving," errors against the rule about the agreement in number of subject with verb. A less noticeable error, but one, nevertheless, is to neglect the proper sequence of tenses, *might* with *can*, or *may* with *could*. It is a pity that the subjunctive mood has almost quite fallen out of use; yet a careful speaker will distinguish the sense of "if I were" and "if I was." Without being pedantic, it is surely desirable to preserve, if possible, the grammatical refinements which express the finer distinctions of our thought.

2. But there should be more than correctness grammatically. A danger, against which a ready speaker, whose thoughts flow freely, has to be on his guard, is the construction of too complex sentences, one clause being added to or inserted in another clause, until the sense is difficult to discover. While it would be

ridiculous to demand that all sentences should be short and quite simple in structure, and while a complex sentence may be often necessary to express a thought with the limitations and qualifications demanded in the interests of truth, yet perfect lucidity should be made a constant aim ; and any composition that leaves the meaning uncertain, or even puts a strain on the hearer to discover the sense, is to be condemned. But, on the other hand, there should be variety of structure in the sentences. A succession of sentences made on exactly the same pattern is apt to become tiresome. The length and make of the sentences should vary. The interrogative and imperative moods may be used as well as the indicative. Sometimes repetition does add effect. A quick succession of short sentences may form an effective appeal. The repetition of a phrase in different settings may express the manifold aspects of a fact or a truth. Care should be taken not to end a sentence with an insignificant word, such as a preposition. While the regular order of words should be generally followed, for the sake of emphasis, a word may be thrown into an unusual position. “Him, . . . ye did crucify and slay” (Acts ii. 23), may be given as a good instance. The arrangement of the sentences in a paragraph, or the paragraphs in a sermon, should be con-

sidered, so that the current of speech should, as it were, gain volume and velocity as it flows on. An insignificant sentence should not close a sermon.

3. While the preacher is never to be a rhetorician, but must aim at delivering his message as directly and simply as can be, he may attain his end all the better if he does not altogether disdain figures of speech.

The Bible abounds in figurative language. We have the *simile* in Psa. ciii. 15, "As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth." Matt. iii. 12 may be taken as a good example of a *metaphor*, where a comparison is implied, but not explicitly stated. "He will gather his wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." Jesus uses *personification* in His words. "And wisdom is justified by her works" (Matt. xi. 19). Instances of *allegory* are found in John x. 1-18, "the Good Shepherd," and xv. 1-8, "the True Vine," although the figure is not strictly maintained. *Euphemism* is surely represented in the messenger's report of Absalom's death in 2 Sam. xviii. 32. "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is." A notable example of *Climax*, the rising of the subject from step to step, is

the messenger's report of the capture of the ark to Eli. "Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken" (1 Sam. iv. 17). Jesus expresses His deep emotion at the sight of impenitent Jerusalem in the *apostrophe*, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt. xxiii. 37). Intense emotion finds expression in an *exclamation*, as Isa. vi. 5, "Woe is me! for I am undone." It is evident that we have an *hyperbole* (exaggeration) in John xxi. 25, "I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." While *irony* (Job xii. 2), "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you," to chastise vanity and folly is not altogether out of place, yet it is a weapon to be seldom used. The effectiveness of striking contrasts is used in *antithesis*, as Psa. cxxxviii. 6, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." Apparent contradiction is the strength of the *epigram*, 1 Cor. i. 25, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the

weakness of God is stronger than men." The use of a part for the whole (*Synecdoche*) as found in John i. 14, "The Word became *flesh*," where flesh stands for manhood. The words of institution at the Lord's Supper are an instance of another figure of speech (*Metonymy*), the *cup* being used for its contents. 1 Cor. xi. 25, 26, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me, for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death, till he come."

4. But rules for style cannot go very far; they may remedy some defects, they cannot produce excellences. The best way to get a good style is to read carefully as much as possible of the best literature; not that we may imitate any of the great writers, for that would be but to make ourselves ridiculous, but that we may, without deliberate imitation, by our converse with them, be made a little more like them in our own natural, spontaneous speech. I am aware that counsels have been given by competent authorities in these matters in favour of such deliberate imitation. But that, I think, is a mistake. For, on the one hand, the great masters have their distinctive genius which is inimitable, and their mannerisms, which are most easily imitated; and on the

other, every man should be himself, even in his mode of speech, while developing his own powers by contact with the great masters in literature.

## XII

### THE RULES OF REASONING

IN a sermon or speech not only are the feelings appealed to, not only is the conscience addressed, but the mind is recognised in varied processes of reasoning. As often a good case is spoilt by bad reasoning, it is important that in preaching we should follow closely the rules of good reasoning, even although it would be absurd to state our arguments in the formal methods of logic. We may cite our own personal experience in confirmation of a truth, and we may also appeal to the moral or religious consciousness in support of a statement. Where the authority of the Scriptures or of Christ is unreservedly accepted, a text of Scripture or a saying of Christ may clinch an argument. But a sermon should not consist exclusively of such methods of argument, but in the reasoning, as in the style and vocabulary, there should be variety.

2. A common method of reasoning is the *inductive* (*a posteriori*), in which a general truth is derived from a number of instances. Thus Paul in Romans seeks to prove the universal sinfulness of mankind by first describing the moral condition of the heathen, and then of the Jews (Rom. i. 18—iii. 23). In using this method we should beware of too hasty generalisation. Because we have met with a number of cases in which what seems a sudden conversion has taken place, we must not assume that this is the general law for the beginning of the spiritual life. From a few incidents recorded in Scripture we must not draw conclusions as regards God's ways, unless contrary instances have been satisfactorily explained. We must not, like Job's friends (Job iv. 7, 8), conclude that the wicked are always punished because some we know have got their deserts. Another common method is the converse of this; the *deductive* (*a priori*) method draws from the general truth a conclusion regarding particular instances. Thus, to learn a little more from Job's friends, they, by too hasty generalisations, set up the general truth, the wicked are punished; and by too hasty deduction from it they concluded that Job's suffering must be the punishment of his wickedness (chap. viii. 1–6). Paul deduces from God's creatorship His right

to do as He pleases with His creatures (Rom. ix. 20, 21); but even in this case we must ask ourselves whether there are no moral obligations in creatorship that set limits to this right, and we may doubt the validity of Paul's argument. Because atheism has often gone along with moral laxity, we must not conclude that every atheist is immoral. Much harm has been done by such deductions, and we must always carefully test their worth by a careful consideration of all the relevant facts within our reach.

3. These are the two main processes of reasoning, but there are others as valid. Thus we may reason from a contrast or a comparison; from difference or resemblance. God is not a man: therefore He will not lie (1 Sam. xv. 29); this argument appeals to the unlikeness of God and man. But there may be combined contrast and comparison: a likeness in quality may be accompanied by an unlikeness in degree. In the contrast of Adam and Christ (Rom. v.) the influence of one person over the race is the common element; the influence of Christ must be as much greater as He is greater than Adam. This argument is known as *a fortiori*, and the formula is "how much more." To give another instance, the likeness of quality may lie in the identity of character; the unlike-

ness in degree in the differences of relation. If by the death of Christ justification is secured, how much more salvation by His life (Rom. v. 8-10). When we appeal to likeness, the argument is generally called *by analogy*. Paul, for instance, deduces the duties of the members of the Christian Church to one another from its likeness to a living body (Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 12-31). Christ's parables usually involve this method. We must be careful, however, to make sure that there is a resemblance that justifies the comparison, and that we do not draw more than the resemblance really involves. Thus in the parable of *the importunate widow* the sole point of comparison is the importunity of the widow and its success. We should be misusing the comparison if we drew any conclusions on the assumption that in any respect God corresponded to the unjust judge (Luke xviii. 1-8). Especially in comparing God and man we must always recognise difference as well as resemblance; for how often have preachers assigned to God their own defects and passions. Yet there can be no doubt whatever that this method of analogy is the most attractive and effective for popular use.

4. There are two other kinds of argument, of which the use should be much more chary. The first is what is known as the *argumentum ad*

*hominem.* Paul, for instance, in the ninth chapter of Romans, writes rather from the Jewish standpoint of his opponents than from his own Christian standpoint. The preacher may sometimes need to put himself at the lower point of view of some of his hearers to get at them effectively. Thus fear may be no motive in his own Christian life, yet he may sometimes present those facts which appeal to this motive in others. But as soon as he can he must try to win them to the higher. The second is known as the *reductio ad absurdum*. Paul argues that if God's election is of works "grace is no more grace" (Rom. xi. 6). So the modern preacher may argue that if there is no God, freedom, or immortality, religion and morality are an illusion, nay, even deception. But this is a conclusion that, recognised as absurd, discredits the premises from which it is drawn. In such ways may the preacher seek to commend his message as reasonable.

## XIII

### THE DELIVERY OF A SERMON

THE modes of delivering a sermon which have usually been adopted are mainly three. The sermon may be read from a manuscript; or a written sermon may be committed to memory word for word; or an outline may be prepared, and the sermon be spoken with or without notes.

(a) As regards the first mode not only should the style, as already indicated, be that of a speech with an audience in view, and not of an essay intended for readers, but in the delivery the greatest care should be taken that the reading should not be obtruded on the notice of the hearers. The MS. should be so clearly written that it can be read without effort standing upright in the pulpit, or even while moving freely from side to side. The leaves should not be so turned over as to attract attention; loose leaves written on one side which

can be slipped down or aside on the desk should be used. The eyes should not be so glued to the MS. that the hearers never catch a glance from the speaker ; for the eye is a great help in keeping the attention of an audience. Appropriate expression and gesture need to be more carefully cultivated in reading than in speaking, when both will be more spontaneous. Above all the MS. must be thoroughly familiar so as to secure the greatest freedom and force in delivery.

(b) The method of committing to memory is one that it seems to me should be carefully avoided. Not only does it impose an intolerable burden, but the effort of memory involved will generally affect the delivery unfavourably, making it monotonous and lifeless.

(c) Notes in speaking are an assistance to the memory ; but often prove a distraction both to the hearers and the speaker. To come to a dead stop and then pause to look at the notes is to court failure. The current of speech is often stopped by the preacher who has to refer again and again to his notes, and so the cumulative effect of his sermon is lost. If notes are used, the speech should show no evidence of their use, no pauses, no looking down suddenly, no pulling up the thought and starting afresh. The plan which seems prefer-

able is to get the outline so firmly fixed in the memory that the sermon can be spoken without reference to notes at all. Of course, the structure of the sermon must be logical, the parts closely connected, if the memory is not to be unduly strained. It seems to me that the choice lies between the first and the last method —the read sermon, or the sermon freely spoken without notes. My own practice is the latter; but I am not going to express a preference. Yet for open-air or mission-hall preaching it seems to me the power of free-speech should as much as possible be cultivated.

2. In delivering a sermon attention should be given to correct *pronunciation*. English is spoken with a great variety of local accents, and it is seldom a man can get rid of every trace of his native accent. A Scotchman, trying to speak High English, usually makes himself altogether ridiculous. Accent is to be distinguished from *vulgarisms* of pronunciation that must be carefully avoided, such as the dropping and putting in of the letter *h*, the use of a furtive *r* after *idea*, and other words ending in *a*. The vowel sounds are often most hideously distorted, *ai* is sounded for *a*, or even *i* for *a*, *laidy* or *liddy* for *lady*, *ou* for *o*, *nou* for *no*; this is not a question of accent at all, but of mispronunciation. *Wich* and *wat*

are about as objectional as *singin*, *workin*. There are fashions in the pronunciation of words; and one may be pardoned for not knowing the last fashion, but when in doubt it is well to consult a dictionary.

3. Closely connected with pronunciation is *enunciation*, the distinct expression of every sound. The consonants especially are by some speakers slurred until their speech is just an emission of breath without separation of words from one another, distinction of letters from one another. Each letter in a word has the right to exist, and its existence should be recognised; especially when speaking in a big building is it essential to give each letter its distinctive sound. The different organs of speech should be made flexible by exercise. "Elasticity of movement in the lower jaw, and mobility of the lips, tongue, soft palate, and pharynx are necessary for good articulation" (Newlands). If a speaker finds that he is prone to enunciate any letter indistinctly, he should repeat that letter many times rapidly until he finds himself giving it its proper sound. With *p* and *b* the lips should be well used, with *t* and *d* the teeth, and *g* and *k* the upper part of the throat. Many speakers seem to forget that all these are organs of speech to be used, and try to form the letters in their throats, and

sometimes very deep down. *L* and *r* are letters that some persons seem to be unable to distinguish ; yet *the Gospel according to Ruke*, or *in the beginning was the wold* are to be avoided, even if considerable effort needs to be made to overcome the difficulty. Where *s*, *th*, and *st* come together great care in enunciation is, by some speakers at least, required. “Where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matt. vi. 20) is a verse that it is worth while repeating often and as rapidly as possible. If there is any letter that a speaker finds a difficulty with, he should not be content until he can pronounce it with ease. Not only should the enunciation be distinct, but each word should, as it were, be sent out from the mouth as if aimed at the remotest part of the building. Some men’s words seem to roll to their lips and then drop over. A distinct muscular effort is required to send out the voice.

“In public speaking an additional force is added by a propelling movement from the lower part of the chest : in ordinary conversation the breath is propelled out of the mouth by the pharynx. Not only do the chest movements add to the articulation and make the sound-wave travel, but they indicate whether a speaker is animate or inanimate ” (Newlands).

4. The loudest speaking is not the most easily heard. When the speaker begins to shout he not only hurts his own throat, but he gets on the nerves of many of his hearers. To pitch the voice very high, and to try so to maintain it, is to deprive oneself of the effectiveness of a wide range of tones. Especially in pathetic utterance the danger is to drop the voice, and thus become inaudible to many of the hearers. When the voice is lowered, then very special attention must be given to distinctness and to the projection of the voice into the distance. Some men with naturally thin voices try to speak in very deep tones, but the hearers soon detect the unreality. A thin voice, if skilfully used, may carry even further than a voice that seems to have more volume, if distinctness is not cultivated. Most offensive is the assumption of the preaching voice. A man should use the voice he has as naturally as he can with no affectation.

5. It is natural to accompany speech, especially if it is animated speech, as preaching should be, with gestures. We in Britain use gestures far less than do other peoples. Watch a Frenchman, and he talks, you find, with his whole body. There are some preachers to whom it seems to be natural to stand still, and make no motions at all, and yet they put

a great deal of expression into their words. A man should not do violence to his nature by trying to force himself to make gestures; for artificiality is never effective. But on the other hand there are preachers to whom freedom of movement is necessary; both hands and feet, even the whole body, must be used as they speak. These should not hamper themselves with any unnatural restraints on their liberty. There is a violence of movement and vehemence of tone which may need to be kept in check, as anything that appears exaggeration to the audience is to be avoided as making an impression of unreality. There are awkward movements of the body that should, as far as possible, be corrected. The gesture should be appropriate. A double fist brandished violently before the congregation will not enforce a tender appeal. A descriptive or doctrinal passage in a sermon should be given with little, if any, movement or gesture. A passionate appeal may be fitly accompanied by appropriate action. In reading it must be more difficult to secure this appropriateness than in speaking, as the fit gesture is in that case more likely to come spontaneously. The old methods of elocution, which taught postures and movements, often very artificial, is now altogether discarded. Gesture must be spon-

taneous to be effective; but nevertheless the body may by fit exercise be disciplined into graceful instead of awkward movements; extravagance may be restrained and appropriateness cultivated.

6. In preaching much depends on the mode of voice-production, whether the organs of speech are all used naturally, and so effectively, or violence is done to nature by wrong ways of aiming at effect. Many speakers use their throat far too much instead of the mouth in the formation of sounds, whereas the function of the throat is to regulate the breath; and thus they soon feel tired speaking, and may even bring on disease. Others there are who do not take in enough air to have abundant breath for speech, and so their voice fails them, and they cannot long sustain it. To breathe deeply, to fill the lungs well with air, that is a prime necessity for any public speaker. It may seem strange, and yet it is true, that the speaker has to learn how to breathe and even how to use his breath in speech with least effort to himself and with most effect for his hearers. This whole subject is, however, at present in a transition stage, and it is difficult to make statements that would command the unanimous assent of experts.

## XIV

### BOOKS RECOMMENDED

1. "Lectures on Preaching," by Bishop Phillips Brooks.  
(Allenson.) 2s. 6d.
2. "Nine Lectures on Preaching," by R. W. Dale, D.D.  
(Hodder & Stoughton.) 6s.
3. "The Preacher and his Models," by James Stalker, D.D.  
(Hodder & Stoughton.) 5s.
4. "A History of Preaching," by Dr. Dargan. (Hodder & Stoughton). 7s. 6d.
5. "Lectures on the History of Preaching," by John Ker,  
D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 7s. 6d.
6. "Lectures to my Students," by C. H. Spurgeon. (Passmore.)  
2 vols., 2s. each.
7. "English Grammar," by Morris. (Macmillan's Primers.)  
1s.
8. "English Composition," by Nichol. (Macmillan's Primers.)  
1s.
9. "Logic," by Jevons. (Macmillan's Primers.) 1s.
10. "Elementary Lessons in Logic," by Jevons. (Macmillan.)  
3s. 6d.
11. "English Language," by Campbell. (Laurie.) 1s.
12. "Voice-Production, and the Phonetics of Declamation, by  
J. C. Newlands. (Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier.) 2s. 6d.

**FOURTH SECTION**

**HOW TO MEET THE AGE**



# I

## PROBLEMS OF TO-DAY

WE have in our course of study offered an answer to three questions, How to Study the Bible? How to State the Gospel? and, How to Preach? We now come to our fourth and last question, How to Meet the Age? A study of the history of Christian preaching shows that while there are permanent and universal elements, without which it has no title to be called Christian, yet not only in form but in matter also has there been in all effective preaching an adaptation to time and place. The perils and the needs, the interests and the opinions change from age to age and land to land, and the Christian preacher must present such matter of Divine truth in such forms of human speech as will meet the actual conditions. Preaching loses its power when it repeats traditions and respects conventions, and gets out of close touch with living men.

2. The preacher to-day must find out what it is that interests and impresses, perplexes and torments the men and women to whom he is speaking. As a politician who never reads the newspapers is sure of courting disaster by bringing forward and carrying through a policy opposed to public opinion and popular sentiment, so the preacher who would morally and spiritually guide men must know and understand them. That does not mean that he will stretch his sail to catch every stray breeze of ephemeral sensation, but it does mean that, while steadfast in his fidelity to the eternal Gospel, the Christ who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, he will not ignore what his hearers are thinking, or neglect what they are caring about; but will always be seeking for the point of contact between himself and them, at which his message may secure their attention and appreciation, the open door in their minds and hearts at which the truth and grace of the Gospel may enter.

3. This demand applies especially to those who are devoting their lives to the work of the ministry. They must ever be on their guard against remoteness of opinion, feeling, and aim from the life that is around them. Their detachment from the common burden and battle of life makes this one of their greatest

perils. But the lay preacher, while less liable to ignore and neglect the needs and perils of the hour, as his earthly calling is bringing him into closer contact with the common life, is, at the same time, through lack of the proper training, less capable of finding and giving the Christian answer to these questions. His own Christian experience may furnish him with matter for simple Gospel preaching; but it will not teach him how the truth and grace of Christ meet the intellectual perplexities and the practical difficulties of men around him. Yet he has an opportunity of speaking on these matters as the minister seldom has; it is desirable that he should be able to meet effectively the agnosticism and secularism of the warehouse, factory, or street.

4. The lay preacher cannot be expected to be an expert in regard to these matters; but then it is not with experts that he has generally to deal. A great deal of the unbelief of to-day is very superficial, and appears plausible only to those who are altogether ignorant of the adequate reply which Christianity can give to these objections. In Haeckel's "The Riddle of the Universe," unbelief seems victorious all along the line only to those who do not know that science, through many of its most distinguished exponents, repudiates entirely the

speculations which this author professes to base upon it. His inexcusable ignorance of the origins of Christianity requires no very elaborate exposure. Of this I am quite certain, that any intelligent young man is competent to gain such a knowledge of the Christian defence as will be very much more respectable intellectually than are the attacks commonly made upon it. He should be able to give a reason for his faith, which, if it will not convince the determined unbeliever, will at least persuade the doubtful and perplexed that Christianity can say something for itself.

5. This is, perhaps, not a task that every lay preacher needs to set for himself; the surroundings of some at their daily work may be such that they seldom, if ever, need to offer this apology for their creed; the temperament of some may be such that a discussion would so agitate them as to unfit them for presenting their case most effectively; the capacities of some may be such that they cannot get a firm grip of the arguments involved, as their minds are not logical, but imagination and emotion are most developed. No man should engage in a work he is not drawn to and does not feel himself fit for; and yet, when one remembers how wide-spread is the literature

of unbelief, theoretical or practical, one cannot but very earnestly wish that many Christian young men would cultivate, not the combative spirit of the controversialist but the intellectual capacity that would enable them to hold their own in debate. Could not a good deal be done in the open-air to counteract the influences adverse to Christian faith?

6. In order to help such as may be willing and able to undertake such work, and also for the sake of giving as solid an intellectual foundation to the faith which you all profess and desire to preach, I purpose to deal in a series of lectures with the main questions that are being asked to-day about Christianity, not only as doctrine but as practice. The personality of God, the perfection and divinity of Christ, the freedom and immortality of man are fundamental problems now under discussion, with which you should have some acquaintance. Within Christendom itself there is discussion regarding the doctrine of the Atonement and the fact of the resurrection of Christ, and whatever conclusion you come to should rest on adequate reasons. It is the solution of the social problem, however, which most interests very many; and the question is being pressed, Has Christianity guidance for modern society? Is its ideal social, present, practical?

To this question we shall endeavour to find the answer, not exhaustively, but suggestively, so as to encourage the further study of the relevant literature.

## II

### IS GOD PERSONAL?

THAT there is a mystery in the being of God every Christian will frankly and fully allow, but that the mystery is so great that we cannot make any definite affirmation regarding God we may deny, because the idea of God is as necessary to complete the structure of human thought as to satisfy the necessities of man's religious nature. It is to be observed that to-day we do not need so much to prove *that* God exists, as to show *what* God is. *Materialism*, whether open, or disguised as *Monism* in Haeckel's system, has not many supporters among thinkers who need to be reckoned with. *Life*, as Professor Lodge insists, cannot be derived from *force*, but is directive of force. *Mind*, as Professor Ward has shown, is so different from *brain*, that the transition from the latter to the former is unthinkable. The opinions of many scientific thinkers of eminence

on these two questions may be found in Mr. Ballard's "Haeckel's Monism False." The prominent and dominant anti-theistic attitude is *Agnosticism*, the denial that God can be known.

2. The late Herbert Spencer may be taken as the philosophical representative of Agnosticism, although it was the late Professor Huxley who gave to the term its currency. Spencer recognises that the *phenomenal*, the visible and tangible, the spatial and temporal, does not explain itself, but that we must assume the *noumenal*, a reality universal and permanent behind all appearances. Man has a consciousness of the *Unknowable*, and all that is knowable is dependent on and the manifestation of the Unknowable. "This Unknowable is the fundamental reality which underlies all that appears. It is the omnipresent causal energy or power, of which all phenomena, physical and mental, are the manifestations." This Power must be conceived as certainly not lower than personal. But he refuses to call it personal, because "it is just possible that there is a mode of being transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion." He concludes that it is in "the assertion of a reality utterly inscrutable in nature" that science and religion are to be reconciled. Science concedes that there is a Reality; Religion that it is un-

knowable; but can religion acquiesce in assigning to science alone the Known, keeping for itself only the Unknown?

3. The question which Herbert Spencer definitely raises is whether, if we believe in God, we may think of Him as personal. Before showing the reasons why we may affirm God's personality we must try to form as distinct and adequate a conception as possible of personality, and to deal as fairly and fully as we can with the objections to applying this conception to God. In treating the conception of personality we may expect considerable assistance from psychology, which has recently made great advances in the study of the mental, moral, and emotional life of man. In recent philosophical thought also the conception of personality has received a prominence and has been assigned a significance and value hitherto unknown. The older psychology used to distinguish the three faculties of thought, feeling, and willing, and was often prone to represent mind, heart, and will as if they were separate entities, distinct and even independent of each other. The newer psychology recognises that the fundamental characteristics of personality are thinking, feeling, willing; but it does not distinguish them as separate faculties. It is the one personality, which thinks, feels, and wills; and

whatever function may be most prominent at the time the other two are not altogether absent. Emotionless thought and thoughtless volition are false abstractions, as the inner life is one and whole. Further, it is coming to be recognised more fully than before that thought is very largely determined practically by emotion and desire: that a man attends to what interests him, and that his knowledge is determined not by intellectual curiosity, but by practical necessity. There is a self to be realised, and the mind is guided by that aim, The whole personality is in every function. Most distinctive in consciousness is the contrast between the reality and the ideal of the personality, between what a man knows he is, and what he feels he ought to be. In a normal development the ideal becomes gradually the reality. The ideal may be expressed in Tennyson's words, "Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control."

4. The ideal of personality as thinking is truth, a correspondence of our thoughts with reality. We seek to know self and world alike without limitation or obscurity. To know self as it is, and the world as we know self—that is the aim of our minds. The ideal of personality as feeling is blessedness. We desire to feel in self and others pleasure and not pain. We seek to find the highest worth for ourselves in our-

selves and others. Only as we can reverence ourselves as seeking to realise our ideal can we be satisfied. This blessedness is disturbed, if not diffused, and thus it passes into love, the desire to raise others also to their highest worth. The ideal of personality as willing is righteousness, goodness, holiness, the perfect command of all desires, impulses, and motives, and the entire control of the conditions that determine these. It is the absolute supremacy of the personality over all its own activities and all the circumstances that affect it. While man's personality as imperfect is still developing, he has this ideal of perfect personality, and it is his ideal that he may believe is reality in God.

5. There are two main objections to the application of the conception of personality to God. The one is due to the development of philosophical thought, and the other to the discoveries of modern science. Although the second is probably more familiar than the first, yet we cannot ignore what philosophy has to say in the matter, and give our ear to science alone. All that we know in the world and self is limited in time and space, and is conditioned in its existence by other things or persons. But in this limited and conditioned universe thought cannot find a resting-place. It must

conceive an absolute cause which is not itself an effect, an Infinite Reality, which is not bounded by time and space. The conditioned and limited does not explain itself; it can be explained only by the Absolute and the Infinite. If God is the ultimate reality which is the efficient cause of all that is, He cannot be thought as conditioned and limited, but must be conceived as Infinite and Absolute. But these attributes have been sometimes held to be inconsistent with personality. If we think of Infinite as meaning merely without limits, and Absolute as meaning merely without conditions, then certainly we cannot think of God as personal, because as Infinite and Absolute in this sense we must think of Him as *Blank*. The philosophy that so thought of God had to call Him the Being, or the One. But these are not the true conceptions of the Infinite and Absolute. *Infinite* means not limited by anything outside of itself, and *Absolute* conditioned only by itself. The Infinite and Absolute is the Complete and Sufficient in itself. What is our ideal of personality but such completeness and sufficiency? God's knowledge is the perfect accord of His thought and all that is in Himself or made by Himself. God's feeling is determined by nothing not in Himself, or not deriving its existence from Himself. God's will fully con-

trols all that is its manifestation. As Truth, Blessedness, Holiness, God is thus infinite and absolute personality. For we can conceive perfect personality only as Infinite and Absolute, complete and sufficient in itself.

6. The objection from the standpoint of science is more easily intelligible. Science has given us a far larger and richer conception of the Universe than we have ever had before. Its extension in space and its duration in time are without any imaginable limit, world beyond world on the one hand, age after age on the other. In comparison with this expanse man's home is a speck, and with this continuance man's history is a span. Man seems relatively far less significant and valuable than he appeared when the world's extent and duration were thought of in terms of measurable space and time. If man, it is argued, fills so small a place, and has played so short a part on the boundless stage in the endless drama of the Universe, can we claim that what is characteristic of him as personality is also characteristic of the Reality in all, through all, and over all? To this objection a twofold answer can be given. First of all, because the world is bigger and its age longer than was once believed, have truth, love, goodness, less significance and less value than they had before? The ideal is just as

authoritative and venerable for us as it was before; it is truly a vulgar materialism which would make the meaning and the worth of these things depend on spatial and temporal measurements. Is goodness less worthy of reverence in a bigger than in a smaller Universe? Is truth less deserving to be sought in a long than in a brief enduring world? To affirm any such absurd conclusion is to flout, mock, make little of man's ideal. But secondly, man himself has not shrunk, but grown with the enlargement of his Universe. The mind that can know and understand the nature of so vast a Universe is not to be despised but reverenced. Man in his knowledge of the smallness of his home and the shortness of his history shows his transcendence of these limitations, for it is because he can conceive eternity and infinity that he can thus measure time and space. Man is not, and cannot be, inferior to the world he knows; as knowing subject he remains superior to the object known, however much that object may expand for his developing mind.

7. For the application of the conception of personality to God three reasons can be given. First of all the cause must contain all that is in its effect. Not only is personality in the Universe, but so far as we know its evolution

personality is the last and highest stage in the world's history. The highest and the last manifestation of the ultimate reality is more likely to indicate its nature than the lower and the earlier. Secondly, while man can conceive personality more perfect than his own, yet he cannot conceive perfection beyond his ideal of it. The ideal of truth, love, goodness is absolute. Self-knowledge that leaves no reality unintelligible, self-reverence that has no aspiration unfulfilled, self-control that conquers all opposition, and sovereignly disposes of all resources —what beyond or above this is conceivable? To suppose something transcending ideal personality is vain. Thirdly, Religion, the Christian faith supremely, assumes a near affinity of nature between God and man as the necessary condition of close communion. For fellowship there must be likeness. Society implies similarity. Religion is impossible unless God is so far like man that He can be described as personal.

### III

#### IS CHRIST PERFECT?

THIS age is interested in ethics far more than in dogmatics. It cares very much more for good practice than for true doctrine. What appeals to it most in Christ is the perfection of His example and teaching. If we want to commend the Gospel to those who are estranged from the Christian Church we should begin with the moral character of Jesus. But as we seek to present the evangelical portrait for approval and adoration there are three objections with which we may be confronted. First, it may be questioned whether the portrait in the Gospels is really historical, and not merely imaginative, the creation of the faith of the early Christian Church. Secondly, there may be an attempt to show certain flaws and stains in the character of Jesus as thus portrayed. Lastly, without denying the excellence

of Jesus, it may be maintained that the ideal presented by Him is not universal and permanent.

2. As regards the trustworthiness of the Gospel picture, the following considerations may be advanced. While there are features in the Gospels explicable by the time and place of their origin, the character of Jesus transcends not only the actuality, but even the ideal of the environment in which the Gospels had their source. He is not Jewish, Greek, or Roman, but human. While each Gospel is written from a different standpoint, and the treatment of the history of Jesus is determined in many points by that standpoint, yet is it an harmonious representation of what Jesus was and did that we meet with in the Gospels. Such agreement can be explained only by the actuality of the person thus described. Had the evangelists attempted to deceive, their own moral imperfection would have been betrayed in some features put forward as excellences, but which a more enlightened conscience would condemn as defects. While morally too undeveloped to have imagined such an ideal, they show themselves morally too honest to have invented it in order to deceive the world.

3. As regards the suggestion of defect in

the character of Jesus, it may be said confidently that none of the accusations brought against Him by unbelief can stand before a candid scrutiny. His answer to His mother in the Temple shows neither inconsiderateness nor disobedience (Luke ii. 49); His repudiation of her authority in Cana of Galilee is fully justified by His vocation (John ii. 4); His cursing of the fig-tree was no outburst of petty passion, but a solemn symbolic warning (Matt. xxi. 19); His cleansing of the Temple was not an act of lawless violence, but of righteous indignation (Matt. xxi. 13); for His answer to the Syro-phœnician woman an explanation is to be found in the Jewish exclusiveness even of His disciples (Matt. xv. 26); as probably He never willed the destruction of the Gadarene swine, He is not to be charged either with disregard of the rights of property or cruelty to animals (Matt. viii. 32); His choice of Judas as a disciple involved no deliberate exposure of him to moral peril, as there is no evidence that at the time of choice Jesus foresaw that he would prove the traitor. Again, that Jesus was tempted does not prove His sinfulness, as liability to temptation belongs to any free nature, and is not sinful; only when yielded to does temptation become sin. That He grew in wisdom as well as stature (Luke ii. 52) does not exclude

that at each stage of personal development He possessed the perfection appropriate to it. That He refused to be called good shows only the humility which so long as the moral discipline was not complete refused to claim the completeness of character that belongs eternally to God (Mark x. 18). Clearest proof of Christ's perfection inward as well as outward is His never giving any evidence of penitence or offering any confession of sin. In any but the sinless this would have proved moral insensibility in the highest degree. Still more is Christ's claim to forgive sins, to save the lost, to give His life as ransom for many, to shed His blood as the sacrifice of the new covenant (Matt. ix. 6; Luke xix. 10; Matt. xx. 28, xxvi. 28) an incontestable argument both for the reality and for His consciousness of His own moral perfection.

4. As regards the positive perfection of the character of Jesus, language is strained to its uttermost to describe His abounding and varied excellences. The strength of the man, the grace of the woman, and the charm of the child blend in Him. The time and place, race and religion, do not explain the loftiness of His ideal, the largeness of His sympathy and the lowness of His Spirit. Knowing Himself to be not only the Messiah of the Jewish

people, but also the Son of God and the Saviour of men, He was truly, as He said of Himself, meek and lowly in heart. Terrible in His severity towards hypocrisy, He was most gracious in His pity towards weakness and misery. He loved God in submission to His will, and He loved mankind in His purpose to save, even unto the self-sacrifice of the Cross. Himself holy, without spot or blemish, He loved the unholy so that at greatest cost to Himself He might make them holy. But to this theme we must return when dealing with the Cross.

5. As regards the permanence and universality of the ideal presented in the character of Jesus, it may be admitted that not only in outward manners was Jesus a Jew of His own time, but that His morals were adapted to the conditions of His people and His age. He came as Jewish Messiah. The limitation and concentration of His interests and activities was determined by His vocation. Art, science, philosophy, literature, culture generally He had no direct concern with. He lived and worked for moral reformation and religious revival through personal redemption. He had no political programme, and no ecclesiastical scheme, but only His own service of mankind even unto sacrifice for salvation. There are

many necessary and legitimate pursuits in which Jesus does not offer any example for literal imitation. His perfection was certainly not a quantitative one, as embracing every kind of excellence of which humanity in its varied activities is capable. He was not politician, artist, man of letters, philosopher, captain of industry, social reformer, all in one person. But such a perfection is a mere absurdity. Life to be lived at its best must be limited and concentrated by some vocation. The vocation of Jesus was no accidental or ephemeral one, meeting a casual need or moulded by a passing fashion. He dealt perfectly with the permanent and universal reality of human life, the relation of the soul to God. He not only perfectly revealed what God and man are in mutual relation, but made it possible for mankind to recover the disturbed relation. The moral principles and the religious spirit expressed in His character have a universal significance and a permanent value. Let any man apply the principles and display the spirit in any vocation, however different it may be from that of Christ Himself, and he will be aiming at perfection. We may conclude, then, that the evangelical portraiture is historical, that the Person there presented is perfect in inward as well as outward parts, and that His per-

fection will remain the ideal of mankind in all ages.

(The subject may be further studied in my article on the "Perfection of the Character" in the *Expositor* for 1905.)

## IV

### IS CHRIST DIVINE?

WHILE the grace and glory of the character of Jesus is generally recognised, the aversion to the supernatural which is so characteristic of the age, leads many to the attempt to explain Him as the highest and finest product of a merely human evolution, as explained by race, place, heredity, environment, education, opportunity. In advocating and defending the divinity of Jesus, the Christian Church must recognise both tendencies, taking as full advantage of the one as it can, and opposing itself as little as possible to the other, or rather by the strengthening of the one position weakening the other. The older method sought to prove Jesus Divine by His fulfilment of the predictions of the prophets, His miracles, the supernatural claims He made for Himself, the supernatural mode of His entrance into life, and of His exodus from death. Without deny-

ing any of these grounds of belief, the newer method seeks to exhibit the arguments that are less open to objection, and are more likely to carry conviction for the modern mind. The older method assumed the historical accuracy of the records of the Gospels, and the reports of the prophets, but this assumption itself needs to be justified by a difficult and delicate argument. The older method laid emphasis on the miraculous, which for many minds to-day is an obstacle and offence. The newer method seeks first by other means to make the divinity of Christ intelligible and credible, in the confident expectation that faith in Christ will remove these other difficulties. The three grounds of belief that the newer method advances are the character, and the consciousness of Jesus, and the Church of Christ itself. It has already been shown that Jesus stands alone among men in His sinless perfection; He so transcends His age and His people that none of the factors of a merely human evolution can explain Him. He Himself suggests the sole explanation; it was His unique relation to God which made Him what He was.

2. Turning, then, to the second ground of belief—the consciousness of Jesus—we observe that He came to reveal God as the Father of all men, and to call all men to become God's children.

We must not deny the universal fatherhood and the universal sonship ; but we ignore and neglect the testimony of the Gospels if we argue, as some do, that Jesus claimed for Himself only the universal human sonship in relation to the universal Divine Fatherhood. He presents Himself to us in the Gospels as having a perfect filial knowledge, enjoying a perfect filial communion, and rendering a perfect filial obedience in relation to God. He knows God as no other knows Him ; all things are committed to Him of the Father ; He teaches what God has taught Him, and does what God has given Him to do (Matt. xi. 25-27). His is not the common filial consciousness to which the Gospel calls men. But, further, it is only through Him that men can know and come to the Father. He is the true and living way, and the only way unto the Father (John xiv. 6). He is the image of the Father, so that God is seen in Him (ver. 9). He forgives, saves, and judges men in God's name. His life has such value that it serves as a ransom for many (Matt. xx. 28) ; His blood such efficacy that it seals the new covenant (Matt. xxvi. 28). His return in glory and power is assured, He promises a universal presence and a supreme power (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). The claim is made, not as a prize to be snatched, but as a task to be done, with such

humility, sincerity, and certainty that it is impossible to believe Him either deceived or deceiving ; He so inspires our trust that we cannot but believe Him the Son of God in the unique relation to God, through which alone is mediated the universal relation of men as children of God. If His claim regarding His own inmost personal relation to God is incapable of external confirmation, except in so far as His character and influence on the world are consistent with it, and explicable by it alone ; yet His claim to bring men to God as the saved children of God can be proved either true or false, and thus we pass to the Church, to inquire whether, in its history, He has proved Himself Son of God.

3. By the Church is not meant any ecclesiastical institution, but the community of all believers in all lands and ages, the multitude which no man can number, which confesses Jesus as Christ, Saviour, Lord, because He has done for them all He offered to do, revealed God as Father in the grace of His forgiveness, and redeemed them from sin by the efficacy and sufficiency of the atonement of His Cross. Christian experience testifies that Christ has the value of God, does for man what God alone can do, is to man what God alone can be, gives to man what God alone can give.

Unless Christian faith deceives and deludes, the Divine value of Christ proves His Divine nature. If He is not God, then we are mocked and betrayed by Him, and God has not saved and blessed us in Him. We must deny the sinless perfection of His character, the absolute certainty of His consciousness, the real experience of His Church of Divine salvation in Him, if we are going to deny His divinity. If we acknowledge that He was a good man, and not a deceiver, denying His claim, we must maintain not only that He deceived Himself, but that He was the cause, though innocent, of the most tragic and disastrous illusion of which mankind has been made a victim. If, however, we admit that He came from and was God, then His character becomes explicable, His consciousness trustworthy, Christian experience real. From this standpoint it is now intelligible and credible that His coming should have been anticipated and prepared for in prophecy and history (Rom. i. 2); that He should be related to nature as no other has been, and thus have a power over nature above the human (Acts ii. 22); that He should have existed in the form of God before He assumed the likeness of man (Phil. ii. 6); that that assumption should be by any act of Divine grace received and responded to by an act of human faith, and

not by the will of man, as is ordinary birth (Luke i. 35-38); that it should be impossible for Him to be holden of death, inevitable that He should triumph over mortality, and be the pledge and pattern of the immortality of mankind in Him (1 Cor. xv. 20).

# V

## IS MAN FREE?

WHEN the preacher of the Gospel appeals to his hearers to accept Christ as Saviour and Lord, he assumes man's freedom in two ways. He assumes that, through abuse of freedom, man is guilty before God and needs pardon. He assumes also that, through the use of freedom, man can in faith welcome the grace of God in Christ which saves. He ought surely to be able to defend what he thus assumes. Man's freedom has been recently challenged in the *Clarion* newspaper, a journal which has a wide circulation among the working classes, who are not able to judge the validity of the arguments advanced for this conclusion. What increases the peril of this reasoning is that it appeals to the sentiment of pity for the unfortunate, forbidding any blame of those whose heredity and environment

are unfavourable to the formation of good character, and that it is included in a plea for improvement of the conditions of life, so that the improvement of character may be made possible.

2. Before looking more closely at the argument advanced, we must dwell for a moment on the importance of the issue raised. We assume our freedom in our judgment of ourselves, when we blame ourselves for having done wrong, when we torment ourselves with regrets for the evil consequences of our wrongdoing, when we are ashamed of ourselves for falling so far short of our own ideal. We assume the freedom of others in our judgment of them, when we condemn their bad or commend their good acts, when we trust some and hold aloof from others in accordance with our estimate of their character. Collectively, as organised in society, we in our laws forbid some actions and threaten punishment for any transgression; we thus assume that men are free to obey the laws, and may justly be punished for disobedience. As has just been indicated, our Christian faith assumes men's freedom. Our private morals, our social judgments, our public law, our Christian faith assume as true what is false, if man is not free.

3. Against such testimony to man's liberty what arguments can be advanced?

(i.) The older argument that choice is determined by the strongest motive, as when we choose we must have some reason for our choice, is fully met by the answer, that, while there is no choice without a reason for it, it is the self which in each case determines the reason for action which it will adopt, and that the strongest motive has no inherent strength but becomes so when the self identifies its satisfaction with the course of action to which this motive tends. The self chooses the motive and is not compelled by it.

(ii.) The more recent argument that as our consciousness is altogether dependent on our brain, it is not in any way self-directed, but is altogether determined by physical changes in our organism due to the action upon it of the physical environment, is materialism "naked and unashamed," and is met by the arguments against materialism already mentioned in a previous lecture, that life is not a result of force, but directive of it, and that the transition from changes in the brain to states of consciousness is unthinkable. Here there may be added an appeal to our consciousness. We know nothing of the brain processes that go along with our mental activity, but we do know not

only that we are conscious of directing our thoughts and feelings, but that, when we will to act, our physical organism obeys our volition. We have proof of the dependence of the body on the will rather than of the will on the body.

(iii.) The third argument is that, if the self chooses its motives and controls the body, it is itself the product of heredity and environment. We may frankly admit that liberty is limited both by the inheritances of the past and the surroundings of the present; and may see in the undoubted influence of both a reason for charitable judgment of those who are born of bad parentage and bred in a bad home, and for earnest effort at such social amelioration as will, as far as possible, remove this serious moral handicap from many lives. But there are evidences sufficient to prove that neither heredity nor environment is an inevitable fate. Each man has his own individuality, and that can release itself from the bonds of his heredity and oppose itself to the grasp of his environment. As long as there remains the sense of right and wrong, the feeling of shame or satisfaction, the consciousness of choice, we have no right to affirm that individuality has been destroyed by heredity and environment.

(iv.) The Christian doctrine of original sin

and total depravity has sometimes so interpreted this fact of heredity as to exclude liberty altogether; but this is a perversion of the teaching of Scripture. The sin of the race limits, but does not destroy, the freedom of each member of it. The tendency to evil is accompanied by an inclination to God. In human nature evil is no absolute tyrant and good an abject slave; but the forces are so matched that for each man there is freedom to resist the former by submission to the latter, for each man brings his own individuality from God as a factor in his personal development as well as his heredity and environment.

4. Indications have already been given of the arguments for affirming human liberty. These are man's consciousness of choice, his sense of duty, his feeling of pain or pleasure in the moral quality of his acts, his moral judgments of the acts of others, the social rewards of virtue and restraints of vice, the public law with its threats and penalties, the religious experiences of penitence and pardon. Is not remorse one of the profoundest problems dealt with in human literature? Is not the defeat of good by evil one of the most tragic features of human history? Man's consciousness of an ideal to be realised above and beyond the reality of his intellect, character, development here and

now, the progress he makes in realising it if he honestly and earnestly seeks and strives, the promise of perfection Christ in His example and influence, grace and Spirit, gives—these declare that a man is not the result of material forces or mental motives, of heredity or environment, but has a God-given self which in its endless growth is capable of resisting adverse, and utilising favourable, influences, but is ever directed by its own God-given aim.

## VI

### IS MAN IMMORTAL?

A PROMINENT feature in nearly all religions is the hope they hold out of, and the help they offer for, a future life. In Babylonian and Egyptian religion the abode of the dead was the object of much interest and speculation. Confucianism, which is silent regarding the hereafter, is more a moral philosophy than a religion, and even in China itself is supplemented by other religions. Buddhism in its original form taught escape from conscious existence as salvation; but in its popular forms it seems to meet a common need in its doctrine of future retribution. In the Hebrew religion the faith in a blessed or a woeful immortality was of slow growth; and the very definite doctrine of Paradise and Gehenna in later Judaism was probably not uninfluenced by Persian thought. Christianity claims that in the Gospel life and immortality are brought to

light. The revelation of God as Father and man as child is the basis of the hope. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the ultimate pledge of the victory of the man in Christ over the power of death. The consciousness of Christian believers that Christ is so intimately united with them that nothing can separate them from Him (Rom. viii. 38, 39) inspires their confidence that in death they shall fall asleep in Him and be with Him (Phil. i. 21-23). The Christian hope seems to include an immediate entrance into glory with Christ at death, and an ultimate victory over death at the end of this dispensation (1 Cor. xv. 54). The Jewish teaching of a resurrection of the wicked to judgment, shame, and dishonour is taken up into the apostolic teaching, but it is not a distinctive feature of the Christian hope (John v. 29). The Hellenic belief in an immortality of the soul separated from its prison, the body, was early taken up into the theology of the Christian Church ; and, whatever can be said in its favour, it must be insisted that Christianity as such does not advance any speculative arguments for any natural immortality of the soul, but always represents the eternal life, with which alone it concerns itself, as the gift of God in the grace of Christ (Rom. vi. 23).

2. What are the arguments that can be brought against this Christian hope?

(i.) The first argument is based on materialism. Consciousness, it is said, is a function of the brain; the soul is but the sum or series of mental states, each of which depends on certain changes in the brain; a man *is* what he *eats*. Hence the physical dissolution of the body carries with it necessarily the cessation of all consciousness. That in this present life mind does depend on body must be conceded; but that the dependence is so absolute that consciousness cannot continue apart from its physical organ has not been proved, and the connection is as yet too obscure for human thought to justify any such dogmatism. But the following considerations against this conclusion can be advanced: (1) Man does distinguish himself from his body; (2) he is conscious of his personal identity through all the changes of his body; (3) in the exercise of his will he knows himself not controlled by, but controlling, his body. Hence his consciousness warrants his denial of this absolute identification of himself with his body. Materialism, too, can be shown an inadequate philosophy even for the explanation of the physical universe.

(ii.) Another objection is advanced from the

standpoint of *naturalism*, which views man as but a product of the processes of nature. The universe is so vast and man is so small that it seems an arrogant assumption that he alone should be exempt from the cycle of evolution and dissolution which describes the history of all things. But this is to ignore that man has ideals of absolute value, that he is conscious of communion with God, and that as perceiving and conceiving the vastness of the universe he as the subject is not inferior to the objects of knowledge.

(iii.) From the standpoint of *pessimism* it may be argued that life is so little worth living that its continuance is not to be desired. But this is a mood of a few persons which the facts of life generally do not warrant.

(iv.) For one phase of philosophic thought, *pantheism*, individual immortality seems a lesser good than absorption in the universal life. We may confidently reply that worthier of God's giving, and of man's seeking, is the conscious personal communion of man with God which the Christian hope offers. None of these objections is conclusive.

3. What evidence can be adduced for the Christian hope?

(i.) An argument Bishop Butler favoured and Kant also approved is this. In the present life

character and circumstances do not accord, the wicked may be happy and the righteous miserable. Our sense of justice demands a harmony, and we cannot but believe in a future life as the scene of unerring judgment. This view Christ confirms in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 25).

(ii.) The incompleteness of man's life here suggests another argument. He who lives for beauty, truth, goodness, the ideal, lives not for time, but for eternity, because his aspirations this life cannot fulfil, his ideals cannot here be fully realised. Unless these are but mocking visions and voices man must believe in continuance of his life for its completion.

(iii.) Tennyson has most pathetically and beautifully developed in his "In Memoriam" a third argument. The loving heart protests against the severance of death, and claims the continuance of love's communion after death. As love is the highest, the most godlike element in man, love's claim has authority.

(iv.) Religion supplies a fourth argument. The saints have felt that God will not forsake them in death, that having once entered into loving fellowship with them that fellowship must be continued. God's companions cannot be death's victims (Psa. xvi. 10, 11; xvii. 15).

(v.) The belief in immortality does not rest

simply on the wish to be immortal without good reasons; but the reasonableness of the belief depends on the value of the reasons for the belief. It may be confidently said that these reasons are valid reasons. It is in man's highest life on earth that the hope of immortality rests. But this hope gains confidence, yea, certainty, in Christ. He confirms man's sense of justice in teaching a judgment hereafter; He Himself realises man's ideals, and presents Himself as an example to be followed; His love gives the highest sanction to human affection; He brings men into closest, tenderest relations with God; thus He confirms all the arguments. But He does more. He has Himself conquered death; He lifts men into a divine, an eternal life; He brings so much of God to men as to bring them the pledge as well as promise of immortality.

## VII

### DID CHRIST DIE FOR OUR SINS?

ON the one hand there are very many who are drawn to Jesus Christ by the truth of His teaching and the worth of His example, but find a difficulty in assigning any meaning or value to His death other than that of a heroic and noble martyrdom, a self-sacrifice for the sake of truth and righteousness. On the other hand, the Cross of Christ has in the history of the Christian Church always held the central position; redemption by the blood of Christ has been the very core of the Divine revelation in Him; it is Christ lifted up on the Cross and seen by faith who proves Himself still Saviour and Lord. If there are few now to whom Christ crucified is foolishness and a stumbling-block, although to many His Cross is a burdensome mystery, yet to many who revere His name He as crucified has not proved

the power and wisdom of God unto salvation (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). One reason of this doubt is that Christian theology has often so represented the Cross as to make it a difficulty for the reason and an offence for the conscience. The explanations have varied from age to age, and the help of one age was the hindrance to another. By trying to discover the truth amid the error of these explanations it may be possible for us to see the manifold wisdom of God in Christ crucified.

2. We must first of all look at the evidence for the assertion that "Christ died for our sins." Paul adds "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). What, then, does the Old Testament testify? There is first of all the practice of animal sacrifice in the Hebrew religion, and then there is the ideal of the Servant of Jehovah, who saves by suffering; and around this typical figure gather, as illustrating the same truth, the saints and heroes of the old dispensation, who suffered for the sake of truth and righteousness, and thus on behalf of others. While the old typology which found a Christian meaning in every detail of the ancient ritual must in the light of our modern knowledge be abandoned, yet this remains permanently significant, that when men approached God in worship they presented

a sacrifice, the efficacy of which was variously conceived, but the purpose of which was universally recognised as the removal of the hindrances to fellowship with God, due to sin. Sacrifice was not peculiar to the Hebrew nation, but in it the ordinance received a deeper moral significance. Harnack points out that wherever the Gospel is preached, animal sacrifice is abandoned, a proof surely that the Cross fully satisfies the need that sacrifices sought to meet. More akin to the self-sacrifice of Christ is the ideal of the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. liii.) in whom is exhibited typically the law of life that the salvation of men is ever secured by the suffering of the best and the holiest. This ideal has been fully realised only in Jesus. The fulfilment of this prophecy by Christ was the common belief of the Apostolic Church. In the statement that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, Paul is expressing his full agreement with the teaching of the Church; although his keener insight enabled him to give a deeper meaning to the Cross than could the other apostles. His opponents might dispute about the obligation of the law for the Gentiles, but never about the salvation offered in the sacrifice of Christ. In this view of the Cross the Church had the authority of Christ Himself, who regarded His

life as a ransom for many, and instituted a perpetual memorial of it as the sacrifice of the new covenant (Matt. xx. 28; xxvi. 28). Gethsemane and Calvary are not explicable as a martyrdom; there is in them a profounder significance and a sublimer value. The experience of Christians in all ages confirms the claim that Christ's death is the atonement for the sin of mankind.

3. What does the Cross mean, then, as the means of atonement?

(i.) First of all, the Cross shows man's sin as a wrong against the love, mercy, grace of God. Christ came to the world revealing God in word and deed as Father, and He was opposed, persecuted, rejected, executed by the hands of wicked men. The fickleness of the mob, the denial of Peter, the betrayal of Judas, the fraud and force of the Sanhedrin, the cowardly injustice of Pilate, the fury and cruelty of Christ's enemies at His Cross are an apocalypse of what sin is.

(ii.) But Christ endured patiently, gently, kindly, nay, even forgivingly (Luke xxiii. 34). He showed the love of the Father in His own grace towards sinful men, and above all in His prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers. He not only endured the Cross without loss of love, but in His Cross He showed such love

as is the sign and proof of the love of God. Love suffers that it may save.

(iii.) The Cross is an appeal to the reason, conscience, heart of mankind in condemnation of the sin which inflicted such suffering on the sinless, and in commendation of the love which endured such wrong from sin. Of the efficacy of this appeal there can be no doubt; but we may inquire about its necessity.

(iv.) Unless it was absolutely necessary that Christ should so suffer, then He needlessly provoked the hostility of sinful men, and there was a wastefulness in His love that robs the spectacle of the Cross of its moral impressiveness and influence. It is not love to offer a sacrifice for which there is no need, and without which the good sought might be attained. We are forbidden to dogmatise on the question by our Lord's own hesitation and uncertainty in Gethsemane. It seemed to Him possible that the cup might pass; only in prayer did He learn that it could not pass (Matt. xxvi. 39-42). The necessity of the Cross is revealed by the filial submission of Christ to the paternal demand of God. It was necessary that in forgiving men God's judgment on sin should be made evident (Rom. iii. 25-26). Sin must be pardoned and condemned in the same act. God's grace must not be mistaken for good-

nature. Holiness must not be obscured by love. God must be revealed as the Holy Father (John xvii. 11). That revelation the Holy Son gave in making Himself in love so one with sinful mankind that, Himself sinless, He bore, not the penalty of sin as Himself guilty, but all the consequences of sin, which, according to God's moral order expressive of His holy will, for the guilty are penal—desolation and darkness in a sense of God's distance amid the pains of bodily death (Matt. xxvii. 46). He thus showed what sin costs God, for the Father suffered with the Son to save from sin (John iii. 16). Theories of the Atonement we cannot demonstrate; for it is only by a moral sympathy with Jesus in accepting His Father's will that the moral significance of the Cross can come home to us—God's judgment on sin in the very sacrifice which assures us of His love unto forgiveness. Faith claims the grace of God in the Cross of Christ for the pardon of sin and peace with God. This is the appropriation of the Cross for salvation. But this faith is intended to grow into so close a union with Christ, that we come to feel about our own sin and the world's sin in some measure as He did, and, therefore, to suffer with Him. Faith must become fellowship in His suffering, self-sacrifice for the world's good (Phil. iii. 10).

The Cross becomes the means of our forgiveness in the measure in which it becomes the law of our life. Faith in the Cross energises in the love of the Cross.

## VIII

### DID CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?

WHILE the Resurrection has been regarded in the Christian Church as a fact so certain that on it Christian faith could securely rest, its reality has been widely challenged by many who are ready to recognise the truth of the teaching of Jesus and the worth of His example. It is now generally admitted that the existence of the Christian Church is explicable only by the belief of the first generation of Christians that Christ had risen and was living. Paul, who laid the foundations of the Christian Churches among the Gentiles, was converted by his belief that he had seen the Risen Lord, and in his faith in the Living Lord he found himself one with the Church which he had persecuted. How can the belief be explained without admitting the fact?

(i.) It is not accounted for by the theory that

death on the Cross was only apparent, and that Jesus recovered from a swoon, and survived for a short time in hiding among His disciples, for the impression He in so exhausted a physical condition would have made on the disciples would not have generated the faith in a Living Lord, victorious over death.

(ii.) The theft of the body by the disciples in order that they might spread abroad the falsehood that He had risen is even less credible. Thieves and liars could not have founded the Christian Church, with its lofty moral ideal.

(iii.) Tokens of His continued life in heaven in some way given to the disciples do not explain the glorified body seen by many credible witnesses.

(iv.) That this sight was but a subjective illusion is disproved by the number of persons who profess to have seen Him, and the number of occasions on which He appeared, by the mood of despondency and distrust which marked many of these witnesses, by the complete and permanent change wrought by His appearance in Peter, James, and especially Paul.

(v.) Harnack seeks to distinguish the *Easter faith* from the *Easter message*, the belief in Christ's victory over death and the records of the appearances; but we may ask, whether for that first generation at least there could ever

have been an *Easter faith* without the *Easter message*.

2. Those who doubt or deny the fact make much of the discrepancies in the Gospel records of the appearances. But what this criticism often ignores is that these records are not our earliest evidence for the fact of the Resurrection; and even if they could be proved untrustworthy, we have other testimony to fall back on. Although the witness in the Gospel is fragmentary, the discrepancy in the records does not go further than would be probable in variant oral traditions of the same series of events. The differences do not justify any charge of deceiving or being deceived. Without entering into the minute investigation which would be needed to support this conclusion, we may turn to the other evidence. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 1-11 is not proclaiming what was distinctively his Gospel; he is telling what was the common faith of the Apostolic Church. He offers proofs of the fact in reciting a number of appearances of the Risen Christ. Here we have the earliest record of this *Easter message* in the extant literature. Probably the date of the Crucifixion was A.D. 29, of Paul's conversion A.D. 30, of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, where he learned these particulars, A.D. 35, of his visit to Corinth A.D. 51, and of the First

Letter A.D. 57; less than a generation passed between the event and its record here. If we examine the appearances recorded, it is not easy to believe that we are concerned only with subjective visions. Paul's conversion, the violent change from persecutor to preacher, seems to require a cause as real as Paul himself believed it to be. Between the Peter who denied his Master and the Peter who boldly witnessed to His resurrection the difference is so great that only the certainty of His existence and the assurance of His forgiveness can explain it. The unbelieving brother of Jesus—James—becomes the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. What changed unbelief into faith, unless it was Christ's own presence? Would Paul venture to appeal to the fact of an appearance to five hundred brethren at once, of whom he believed the greater part to be still living, if he had not had good evidence for the statement? Were five hundred persons likely to be seized by a common illusion? Paul, be it noted, assumed that the Corinthians believed in the fact; and he having recited the proof of it, appeals to it in disproof of an error of doctrine regarding man's resurrection into which some teachers in Corinth had fallen.

3. Paul in this chapter (verses 12-28) shows how essential the fact was to Christian faith.

Its significance and value for Christian thought and life may be regarded as a confirmation of the evidence. His argument is this. If there is no resurrection of the dead, as some teach, then is Christ not risen ; our preaching is vain ; we are found false witnesses ; your faith is vain ; you are yet in your sins ; they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished ; if our hope is in Christ only in this life, we are of all men most pitiable. Thus not only was the belief common, but it was the foundation of other beliefs.

First, it was the belief in the Resurrection that enabled the apostles to preach the Cross of Christ not as a human crime only, but as a Divine appointment, a sacrifice for the sin of the world ; for the Resurrection attested the efficacy of the sacrifice, it was the seal of the Divine approval and acceptance.

Secondly, it was the resurrection of Christ which led the Apostolic Church to recognise Christ as Lord at the right hand of God, with supreme dominion over the world as over the Church.

Thirdly, it was the Resurrection that was the foundation of the ardent Christian hope, a prominent feature in the first generation, of Christ's Second Advent in glory and power. While we now recognise that the Church looked

for a more speedy return than God's purpose in human history has appointed, yet we too cherish the blessed certainty of His glorious manifestation to end the Church's work and warfare in His Kingdom.

Fourthly, it was the resurrection of Christ which warranted the belief of His continued presence with believers individually and collectively, in power, wisdom, grace. This inspiring experience is still real in the Church, which is Christ's body.

Fifthly, it was the Resurrection that caused the new creation of the Church with its assurance of salvation, its certainty of victory over death, its promise of immortality. It is by this same faith with this same content that the Church of Christ lives. It has the witness in its own life that Christ lives, and His Church lives in Him.

## IX

### HAS CHRISTIANITY GUIDANCE FOR MODERN SOCIETY ?

WE have been so far concerned with the doubts some modern minds cherish regarding the *truth* of the Christian religion; we must now turn to consider the difficulties some feel in recognising its *worth* for the life of man. Does the Gospel not only answer the questions of the mind, but does it also meet the need of the life for guidance? Modern society, it is argued, is so complex as compared with the simple community in which Jesus lived, worked, and taught, and the many centuries that have passed since His days on earth have seen so many and so great changes, that His moral ideal is necessarily out of all relation, and therefore not applicable to the present age. Even during the nineteenth century the industrial revolution involves so deep-rooted and widespread changes in all social

relations that the moral standards of our modern society have not yet been adjusted to them. In order to get this adjustment we must surely look elsewhere for the illumination we need than to the teaching of Jesus, to whose mind none of the present conditions were present. Many maintain that science alone can assist our moral progress, as it alone is sufficiently up-to-date; religion can prove only a hindrance, as it is coming more and more to be out of fashion.

2. If this charge were true, it would be a most damning accusation against Christianity. Its worth must be proved not only by the consolation it can offer to individual souls regarding the forgiveness of sin and fellowship with God, but by its ability to offer moral guidance to modern society. It cannot be the absolute, perfect, final religion unless it presents a moral ideal, which can be appreciated and appropriated in every land in every age. On the one hand, in making the claim that Christianity does this, we must distinguish the permanent and universal contents from the local and temporary forms of the teaching of Jesus. His particular instances are Jewish of His own age; but His general principles are simply human. To leave the altar to be reconciled to a brother is an illustration from

His immediate environment; the duty of forgiveness is of His essential spirit (Matt. v. 23, 24). It is not in a literal imitation that Christ's moral ideal can be realised, but only by a moral discernment which can sever kernel from husk that even the primary condition of realisation, that is, an apprehension even of the ideal, can be fulfilled. On the other hand, there must be an instructed and intelligent knowledge of all the modern conditions amid which the ideal must be realised, in order that Christian morality to-day may be as thoroughly adapted to time and place as was the teaching of Jesus. If these two conditions are fulfilled, then it may be confidently claimed that the principles Jesus enunciated are as applicable to-day as ever, and that we cannot go anywhere else for the words of the eternal life which our modern society needs.

3. The mistake of any attempt at literal imitation of the practice of Jesus is proved beyond doubt or question by monasticism. It began as an endeavour to live the *evangelical life* of celibacy and poverty, in order to follow as closely as could be in the footsteps of Jesus. At its best it withdrew from the work and the warfare of the common life those who could have exercised the noblest and worthiest influence; at its worst it sunk into sensuality

and indolence. Distinguishing as it did the *evangelical precepts* to be obeyed by all men in the world from the *evangelical counsels* to be followed by those who aimed at perfection, it introduced a double moral standard which ascribed an artificial sanctity to these practices which contributed least to the common good, and pronounced an unjustified censure on the interests, pursuits, and relationships of the common life of mankind in society.

4. Luther rightly and wisely interpreted the mind of Christ, when he condemned the monastic life in itself, and not only its corruptions, and declared holy the earthly vocation of the husband, father, workman, citizen in the world. But the difficulty of carrying out Luther's counsel to do the will of God in the earthly calling, which many men feel to-day as a serious problem shows the necessity in realising the Christian ideal of recognising the modern conditions. Work and life rested in Luther's day on a more individual basis, so that each man was free to apply directly the Christian principles. To-day society is more complex, and the individual is more closely bound by social organisation. The task to-day is, in order that the individual life may be fully Christian the Christianising of the whole society. Not literal

imitation of Christ, but wise and right application of His principles to modern conditions is the way in which alone Christianity can guide modern society.

## X

### IS THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL SOCIAL?

IF the teaching of Jesus can offer guidance to modern society, it must first of all be shown to set before us a social ideal. There is a great variety of opinion to-day on the question, whether the Christian ideal as presented in the teaching of Jesus is social. On the one hand, it is maintained that Jesus was altogether indifferent to all economic, social, and political matters; He cared only for the salvation of the individual soul. On the other hand, it is argued that He was the champion of the poor and the outcast, and the assailant of the rich and the mighty. On the one hand He is represented as conservative of the customs current in his own age and people both in Church and State. On the other, He is declared to be revolutionary in the principles that He laid down. As one studies the Gospels one is led to the conclusion that our party labels—

individualist or socialist, conservative or revolutionary—do not apply to His teaching at all; but that it is both deeper and wider than all opinions that such epithets can describe.

2. That Jesus cared for the individual soul is beyond all question; but as His law for the individual life was absolute love to God and equal love to self and neighbour (Matt. xxii. 37-40), He cannot be regarded as an individualist, in so far as individualism and socialism are opposed. That Jesus warned the rich of the danger of their position, and that He encouraged the poor with the assurance that their condition was favourable rather than otherwise to their spiritual good (Luke vi. 20-26; xii. 15-21), shows such an estimate of wealth as forbids our reckoning Him among the socialists, to whom the adjustment of material conditions is of supreme concern. His concentration on His work, and His avoidance, so far as possible, of all that could hinder that work, explain His conformity to the existing ecclesiastical and political conditions, and do not make him the advocate of the *status quo*. The moral and spiritual character of His ideal excludes the revolutionary in external methods, the violent and the compulsory change; but it does not exclude the revolutionary in inward

transformation of the motive and purpose of life (Matt. xviii. 3; John iii. 5).

3. When we look more closely at the ideal of Jesus we shall, I think, discover principles that afford our modern society the social ideal it needs. The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches the infinite worth of the soul (Luke xv. 11-32); the parable of the Good Samaritan the universality of our human duty (Luke x. 25-37); the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus the doom which a selfish use of wealth incurs (Luke xvi. 19-31); the parable of the Last Judgment the standard of judgment, not profession of piety, but practice of philanthropy (Matt. xxv. 31-46). The greatest of all the commandments—absolute love to God, and equal love to self and neighbour—involves that not only should each man seek to live the highest, holiest, and godliest life possible but that he is equally bound to help every other man to live that life. The voluntariness and vicariousness of Christ's sacrifice confirm this teaching. Even unto self-sacrifice is this universal, generous, beneficent, reverent love for every man to be exercised. Christ's death in love and for the good of mankind—an example which He enjoins His disciples to follow—gives to the *social* ideal the holiest consecration.

4. That Christianity by necessity of its very

nature must exercise a potent influence on human society is proved by its history. The primitive Christian Church was placed in a society hostile to its principles and spirit. This outer antagonism at first intensified its inner unity. The love of the brethren, which is described for us in the Acts of the Apostles, made as though they were not the distinctions of race, wealth, rank, culture, class. But soon this Christian society by its teaching and example became a leaven, leavening the whole lump of the Roman Empire. Much stress is being laid to-day on the paganising of the Church by the surrounding heathenism, and it must be sorrowfully admitted that the salt did lose much of its savour; and yet it must not be overlooked that the Church had gained a far-reaching and deep-rooted influence on Roman society, when Constantine deemed it politic, in his own interests, to recognise the Church that he might get its influence into his control. Monasticism, anti-social as it was in its intention, yet in the Middle Ages exercised a wide and strong social influence; it contributed a great deal to the progress of the culture and the civilisation, the arts and the learning, the manners and the morals of the new nations that rose on the ruins of the Roman Empire. Luther's teaching on social

duty has been already mentioned. The evangelical revival may afford us our last illustration. Its theology was individualist in the extreme, and yet one of its consequences was the abundant and varied philanthropy that marked the beginning of the nineteenth century. If the past of Christianity is an earnest of its future, it can be confidently maintained that its ideal is social.

## XI

### IS THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL PRESENT?

CHRISTIANITY has been charged with “other worldliness,” with a disregard of the joys and claims of the present life, and an absorption in the hopes and rewards of the future life. With the majority of Christians there is no ground for that charge; it is to be feared that as regards most “the world is too much with” them. But the charge does force us to consider the question whether the Christian ideal is diverted from the present and directed to the future. It is still in dispute among scholars whether Jesus meant by the kingdom of God a present or a future reality. Without entering into details, I may state my conclusion that, while He looked for the full fruition of the kingdom in the future, He did recognise a progressive realisation in the present; He did not separate and oppose the pre-

sent and the future of the kingdom (*see* the parables in Matt. xiii.).

2. In view of the teaching of Jesus there seems to be a twofold task resting on the Christian Church. It must first of all affirm that the full fruition of the kingdom—human society as God's realm, through His rule in every individual soul, lies in the future. The ideal is too large and lofty for immediate realisation; only by a gradual transformation can the new heaven and the new earth come. The Christian must realise that his citizenship is in heaven; that the clear vision of, close communion with, and full resemblance to, Christ await him beyond these shadows; that the fulfilment of God's will here on earth as it is in heaven is still "the far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." This will prevent short views, narrow hopes, low aims. The Christian man can fashion his personality on a large scale, as eternity is his for the completion of the structure. The Christian society can cherish a large and lofty purpose because to it is given a wide and long prospect in human history.

3. But along with this affirmation should go what the Christian Church may be blamed for neglecting—a summons to work here and now for the progressive realisation of the kingdom

of God. Christ did not separate present and future, as Christian doctrine has sometimes done. The seed is now being sown of the harvest that shall be. Individual virtue and social righteousness are the necessary conditions both of blessedness in heaven and blessing on earth. Character determines destiny ; effort secures progress. The Christian ideal is no ethereal prospect ; it is a substantial programme of present duty. In each age and for each person there are opportunities and abilities of this progressive realisation. The conditions of each time and place limit and determine the realisation, but it cannot be shown that ever anywhere the ideal offers no guidance to purpose and effort. Anticipating the future, this ideal recognises fully the present.

4. Christian history is in this point also full of instruction. That the eschatological aspect of the kingdom—that is, the belief in the Second Advent of Christ in power and glory to reign on earth—was in the Apostolic Church at least as prominent as the ethical, God's present authority and influence in the lives of believers cannot be denied. And yet the Divine guidance of the Church led it to allow this aspect to fall into the background and to put the other into the forefront. Here and there were sects who anticipated Christ's speedy return and

the end of the age, and these expectations resulted, as a rule, in vain enthusiasms, if not injurious fanaticisms. The Church generally set itself to discharge its task in the existing order of society. During the Middle Ages this anticipation was again and again revived, and in no case can it be said that the progress of the Church or of the world was thereby advanced. At the Reformation these hopes were rekindled in some sects, proving not an assistance, but a hindrance, to that great movement. God's mind is surely revealed in the course of the history of His Church on earth. It does not seem, in view of the past, to be at all desirable that the eschatological aspects of the kingdom, as these have been from time to time conceived in the Church, should be thrown into prominence; but it is supremely desirable that, while the hope of Christ's ultimate triumph should inspire and sustain the labour and the struggle of His Church in the world, yet the duty to the world in the present age to which the Divine voice calls should be always kept in the foreground; for it is a present good as well as a future gain which Christ offers.

## XII

### IS THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL PRACTICAL?

IT has been maintained, however, that the Christian ideal is not realisable in, although it may be intended for, the present. It is said to be not *practical*. Two considerations may be advanced in answer to this challenge. Firstly, Tolstoi and such as he must not be accepted as the authoritative exponents of what the Christian ideal is. The distinction which Luther made between the redemptive and the creative realm of God must not be overlooked. The Sermon on the Mount is the inner law of the new life of the Christian. It cannot be at once translated into the social order. Just as the law was tutor to Christ, so many institutions of human society have a preparatory and disciplinary function, and cannot be violently removed, even although they fall far short of the Christian ideal; but they must be gradually transformed by the Christian spirit working

outward from the renewed man. The method of the kingdom of God is evolutionary, not revolutionary.

2. Secondly, however, how far any change in outward institutions in accordance with the inward spirit of Christianity is practicable is not to be determined by the timid and self-regarding Christian, but by the courageous and self-sacrificing. Genius is often much more practical than common sense. The seer often knows much better what is possible in the Church and in society generally than the man of business. There are possibilities of heroism and self-renunciation in the human soul that a calculating prudence knows nothing of, and that only a bold faith can evoke. Whether the Christian ideal is practical is not to be determined by the man who can apply only the standards of the market and the street, but by the man who on the mount with God has learned to see in his fellow-men possibilities of devotion and fidelity to holy causes which are hidden from selfish and worldly eyes. Again and again in the world's history has this trust in man's best been fully vindicated.

3. This question was differently answered at the Reformation in Lutheranism and Calvinism, and the historical issue is still full of significance for us. Luther maintained that the will of God

## XIII

### BOOKS RECOMMENDED

1. "A Manual of Christian Evidences," by C. A. Row, D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton.) 2s. 6d.
2. "Handbook of Christian Evidences," by Principal Stewart, D.D. (A. & C. Black.) 6d.
3. "A First Primer of Apologetics," by A. Mackintosh, D.D. (Elliot Stock.) 3s. 6d.
4. "Haeckel's Monism False," by Ballard. (Kelly.) 5s.
5. "The Miracles of Unbelief," by Ballard. (T. & T. Clark.) 2s. 6d.
6. "Personality: Human and Divine," by J. R. Illingworth, D.D. (Macmillan.) 6d.
7. "Divine Immanence," by J. R. Illingworth, D.D. (Macmillan.) 6d.
8. "Anti-Nunquam," by Dr. Warschauer. (H. R. Allenson.) 6d.
9. "In Relief of Doubt," by Welsh. (Allenson.) 6d.
10. "Christian Conduct," by T. B. Kilpatrick, D.D. (T. & T. Clark.) 6d.
11. "Christian Character," by T. B. Kilpatrick, D.D. (T. & T. Clark.) 6d.
12. "The Christian Personality," by A. E. Garvie, D.D. (Bagster & Sons.) 1s.
13. "My Brother's Keeper," by A. E. Garvie, D.D. (Bagster & Sons.) 2s. 6d.
14. "Was Jesus Christ Divine?" by Canon Masterman. (Wells, Gardner.) 1s. 3d. net.

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